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DOROTHY EPPUSON

PLAYS OF THE
47 WORKSHOP

THREE PILLS IN A BOTTLE
By RACHEL LYMAN FIELD

"THE GOOD MEN DO"
By HUBERT OSBORNE

TWO CROOKS AND A LADY
By EUGENE PILLOT

FREE SPEECH
By WILLIAM L. PROSSER

48146

NEW YORK
BRENTANOS
1918

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INTRODUCTION

All the plays in this volume were originally produced by The 47 Workshop, — not "The 47 Workshops" as one or two newspapers, apparently recalling Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, have called the organization. The somewhat homely title means just what it suggests. This is a "Workshop," because anyone who believes he has ability in any of the arts connected with the theatre — acting, scene or costume designing, lighting, directing, or playwriting — may here prove his quality. It is "The 47 Workshop" because it grew from a course in playwriting, English 47, for many years offered by the Department of English of Harvard University.

The 47 Workshop, however, is not in the usual sense a theatre. It has no wish to revolutionize anything. It masks no scheme for a civic or community theatre. Its main purpose is to try out interesting plays written in the courses in Dramatic Technique at Harvard University and Radcliffe College. Though it does reserve the right from time to time to revive some classic like "Maître Patelin," some curiosity like the "Revesby Sword Play," or to produce some notable foreign play not likely to be seen on the professional stage of this country, such as the Icelandic "Eyvind of the Hills," its usual order of

election is: first, plays recently written in one of the courses; second, plays written by a past member of these courses within five years after completing study at Harvard or Radcliffe; third, any other plays by Harvard or Radcliffe graduates; fourth, revivals of dramatic classics or curiosities, or productions of foreign plays.

The 47 Workshop was founded in 1912 to meet a need steadily more evident in the courses in dramatic composition. Plays of real merit and evidently ready for professional production found an opening sooner or later, but each year others were written, full of promise, but not likely to find a ready market because of their unusual subjects, some peculiarity of treatment, or technical faults which the author, in spite of class criticism, could not see. What was needed to prove the availability of some of these for the general public, or to round others into final shape, was merely an opportunity to see the play adequately acted before an audience, sympathetic yet genuinely critical. Just because The 47 Workshop, a local response to a wide-felt need, began in the simplest way and has grown into admitted effectiveness under conditions often very unfavorable, its history may be useful to persons who are dreaming of some such place for trying out plays, or are wondering why some experimental theatre in which they are interested is not succeeding.

The 47 Workshop began with a guarantee for one year of five hundred dollars, given by past members of the courses in dramatic composition. For that sum three long original plays were pro-

duced, — six performances in all. The theatre, seating comfortably only some two hundred at each performance, was put at the disposal of The Workshop by Radcliffe College at the expense only of lighting and service. The small stage is really a lecture platform, originally surrounded by steel-girdered walls which have been slightly readjusted to make giving plays a little less difficult. Dressing rooms have been inadequate. Any painting of scenery must for lack of space be done away from the theatre. Because this was available for only two rehearsals before each performance, such work must for some years be done in a room the floor space of which bore no relation to the stage to be used. In other words, The 47 Workshop began much as any organization will begin which, having no special building, must give its plays in a hall on a stage primarily intended for lectures, must rehearse where it can, and must store its belongings here and there.

The fundamental principle of The 47 Workshop — and to this it has held steadily throughout its history — has been that everyone from director to stage hands must coöperate in putting the play upon the stage as the author sees it. A play is not accepted unless in itself worthy and not until the director believes the author has done all he can for it at the moment, and needs a production if he is to round it into final shape. Before any final plans as to setting, costuming, and lighting are made, the author is carefully consulted, as he is in regard to the casting of the play, — though the director has the last word in this matter.

The author is expected to be present at all rehearsals, and between each rehearsal and the next to keep the director informed as to any suggestions he may have to make. Except by special permission, he is expected to deal with the actors, only through the director. If he has had experience in coaching plays, he is asked to take charge of some of the rehearsals, usually the earlier, when the actors are studying the broader aspects of their characters and the general atmosphere of the piece. When a play is once approved for production, changes are avoided in order that the author may make them not because advised so to do by anyone immediately connected with the production, but because he is convinced by the consensus of opinion in his audience that such changes are imperative. In other words, any attempt to relegate the author to the position of some one doubtless necessary in the writing of the play but thereafter more desirable absent than present, is frowned on. Unquestionably a producer knows best how to get the effects an author desires, but just what these effects are the author surely knows best. The result of this policy has been great loyalty to The Workshop on the part of its authors.

It is a corollary of what has just been said, that The 47 Workshop believes "The play's the thing." The curse of many an experimental theatre is amateurishness — the spirit which makes the play merely an occasion for social meetings; which puts the actors ahead of the play; and which treats lateness and irregularity in at-

tendance, noisy rehearsals, and a superficial study of a part as quite natural. Most amateurs speak lines; they do not act, in the sense that they remake themselves into the characters of the play. Ask most amateurs to sacrifice something to the ensemble, or to play in a scene which they believe could easily be bettered, and they are likely to be discontented or rebellious. Such an organization as The 47 Workshop could not, of course, be maintained by actors with any such standards. It was necessary therefore slowly to gather together a group of actors who would regard the play as of first importance. Harvard and Radcliffe were, of course, most frequently called on, but anyone who has cared to offer his or her services, and who could show some previous experience, has been given an opportunity. Little by little, as these persons — they range from children to people of middle age — have proved their competence, they have been invited to become members of The 47 Workshop Company. When elected to this, a member agrees to act when called on; to do his utmost in helping to produce the play as the author sees it; to play any part the director assigns; not to act elsewhere without permission; and when acting elsewhere, to see that he is accredited on any program to The 47 Workshop. The election comes by recommendation from the executive committee to a sub-committee composed of the director and two representatives from the company. The decision of this sub committee is final. Two members of the company, one man and one woman, represent it in the executive com-

mittee, which governs The Workshop. To-day members of standing in the company can be depended upon to see that any neophytes strictly regard the traditions which have been built up as to promptness and quiet at rehearsals, speedy learning of parts, and subordination of self to the ensemble. The loyalty and the growing skill of this company, some thirty in number, are largely responsible for whatever success The 47 Workshop has had.

Early in the history of the organization it became evident that there should be an artistic director who, after preliminary conference with the author and the director, would supervise the setting, costuming, and lighting of each production. Immediately the desirability of this step was proved by the disappearance of clashing colors, costumes that did not accord with the setting, and other artistic flaws previously caused by carelessness, differing tastes among the actors, and even some native obstinacy. As the organization has grown, it has become necessary to put some one in charge of the increasingly large amount of scenery, who shall be able to say at a moment's notice what is in hand which may be used as it is or when made over, and what must be specially built and painted. It is now possible to paint within The Workshop practically all the scenery used. The person in charge of this work, like the person in charge of costumes, and the person in charge of lighting, works under the supervision of the artistic director. It has become necessary to put some special person, made responsible

to the stage manager, in charge of small properties, who gives out and replaces all stock properties and catalogues the new. It has been possible slowly to replace hired stage hands by volunteers, and to shape them into a group analogous to the company, chosen by election after proved service. They are represented on the executive committee by the stage manager, and from them stage managers and property managers are first chosen. In other words, paid assistance has been eliminated slowly, so that from the writing of the play to the dropping of the final curtain — through acting, directing, scene and costume designing or making, lighting, make-up, and scene-shifting — The 47 Workshop now depends upon its own members.

An executive committee, composed of the director, the secretary-treasurer, and the heads of all working committees, as well as two representatives from the company, guide and control the fortunes of The Workshop. Naturally the heads of the various departments change from year to year, and sometimes oftener, but a small group of three or four have worked together from the very beginning and thus have been able to see that, while there has been growth, there has been no dangerous departure from the original purposes for which The Workshop was founded.

Membership rests on one of the basal principles of the organization. The audience is confined by seating conditions to four hundred — for each evening, two hundred. Membership comes through an election committee. Candidates for the audience must be proposed and seconded by members,

with a statement of qualifications, for every regular member before admission is supposed to have shown some special interest in the kind of producing and plays which The Workshop provides. Persons who might come, as do most audiences at amateur theatricals, to admire and praise unthinkingly their friends among the actors; persons who are interested only in seeing their own plays, or plays of a similar kind; persons who cultivate the bizarre in plays or indeed any one particular kind of play — all such are not welcome. On the other hand, people who care deeply enough for the theatre to be interested in seeing plays of promise rounded into shape; people who are interested in all kinds of experimentation in the arts of the theatre — all such are very welcome. Every member is expected to contribute something. In the first place, he agrees to hand in a written comment on each production, within a week of the final performance. Secondly, he marks on a membership card the one or more activities of The Workshop in which he is willing to share. Here he is given a wide choice. These conditions mean that, even apart from the criticisms, a large portion of the audience annually coöperate in the work of producing the plays.

All criticisms are handed in signed. When the director has read them, the names are removed and the comments handed to the author of the play in question. In later conference with the director, the author decides what changes must be made in his play in the light of the criticisms. These are as a group always helpful. Every play

in this volume has been thus rewritten, and the Craig Prize play, "Between the Lines," as well as the Washington Square success, "Plots and Playwrights," both originally produced by The 47 Workshop, were before professional production rewritten under these conditions.

As the possessions of The 47 Workshop in the way of scenery and properties became too numerous and cumbersome to be stored away in odd places, Harvard College put storage and rehearsal space at its disposal. All plays are now prepared for nearly three weeks in a rehearsal room and then transferred to the theatre at Radcliffe for two dress rehearsals and two performances. For two nights before the first dress rehearsal the stage manager and his force are fitting the settings to the stage, and seeing that all properties are on hand and in place. The aim is to have the stage, so far as scenery, properties, and lighting are concerned, in such condition that the director can at this first dress rehearsal really rehearse, without long waits for the setting of scenery or the right placing of properties. Of course, this desired result is possible only when there is a spirit of complete coöperation on the part of the artistic force and all who are working under the stage manager for the desired total result — the best production of the play in question that The Workshop force can give. People who wish, cost what it may to the author or the play, to exploit themselves or their special gifts in settings, costuming, lighting or any other form of stage-craft, have no proper place in work of this kind. They

should have their own theatres, to which the audience admittedly comes to see their work.

One of the chief difficulties in the way of most experimental theatres is their financing, for a theatre easily becomes a place of extravagance and waste. Experience has shown clearly that The Workshop, with its system of trained volunteer aid, can give an adequate performance of a three-act to five-act modern play, for approximately three hundred and fifty dollars. A program of three or four one-act plays or a costume play naturally costs somewhat more. That is, with an annual income varying from twelve hundred dollars to never more than two thousand dollars at the most, The 47 Workshop has been able during a season to produce four programs at the least — one of these of short plays — and at the most five programs, two of these of short plays; a total of, say, three long plays and seven one-act plays. This has meant in recent years no painful economy such as any organization might be unwilling to undergo, but merely careful coöperation to see that no money is wasted. No one is asked to pay a membership fee, for it has seemed to the executive committee that regular dues might lead members to feel that their preferences in types of plays to be produced should be considered. This committee has felt that only with an absolutely free hand could they treat with equality the many different kinds of play written in the courses in playwriting. However, members, knowing that the means of the organization have always been limited, have sent in contributions when they

pleased for the amount they pleased. As a result, since the first year The 47 Workshop has been supported by large and small gifts from its members, only to a very slight extent solicited. These solicited subscriptions have come from members who, individually, have guaranteed particular productions by subscribing the three hundred and fifty dollars necessary. With the approval of the executive committee, such a giver has named the production for someone in the past connected with The 47 Workshop, or if he preferred, for some noted actor or actress. The history of The 47 Workshop has proved that what is vital in such experimentation is not a large sum of money, but enough to pay expenses without a scrimping that cheapens the artistic results, until such time as three or four hundred people become convinced that the organization stands for something they wish to see and is thriftily managed. They will then readily provide what funds are necessary. In order to produce this desired state of mind, the play should be made of chief importance, first, last, and always. This means that the acting, the scenery, the lighting, and the costuming must as soon as possible be made adequate, and soon thereafter imaginative and contributive. What kills experimental theatre after experimental theatre is waste where there should be judicious economy and a desire to branch out too soon into all the possible activities of a theatre. The experience of The Workshop in its six years of existence has shown that, if the main emphasis is kept on the play, an audience will permit a slow growth

toward desired ideals. It will allow, too, a shifting of the chief accomplishment — from acting to setting, to lighting, or to some other activity — as special conditions in a particular year make it necessary to develop one department more than another. Do the best that conditions permit with the play in question, and an audience which comes for the purposes which bring the Workshop audience together will be both loyal and appreciative.

The 47 Workshop is, of course, merely one type of several which have developed in the recent rapid evolution in experimental theatres. Like many others, it probably would never have been founded had not the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, under the brilliant and wise guidance of W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory, shown how much may be done from the smallest beginnings, if courage and wisdom assist. Of course, it has had to adapt to its conditions many ideas given it by the Dublin company. In turn, its history has led directly or indirectly to the forming of a number of similar organizations, such as The Theatre Workshop of New York, The Playshop in Chicago, The Vassar Workshop, etc. Just because there has been widespread interest in possible adaptation of its methods to conditions elsewhere, general to a community or special to school or college, it has seemed not immodest to give its history with the detail of this introduction.

Surely it is undeniable that such a laboratory is indispensable for the swift training of young dramatists or possible stage directors. Without it a dramatist waits to see his work in action until he

is fortunate enough to get a professional production. In many cases this means that all the weeks before the play is brought into New York or one of the leading cities are spent in reshaping the play by what the author and others are able to guess the audience thinks of the play. A large proportion of these changes, if not all, may be forestalled in such an experimental theatre, for most of them concern matters of clear exposition, right emphasis, convincing motivation, confused structure, or strong prejudices on the part of any audience overlooked by the author. When a play professionally produced has a dubious reception, everyone from call boy to actor falls to guessing why — and few guess rightly. There is no guessing involved in rewriting with the aid of such an audience as The 47 Workshop provides. There people trained in the theatre, amateurs of the theatre, specialists in different arts connected with the theatre, persons entirely competent to stand for "the general public," all make their individual comments in their individual ways. From the total result, even if at first it may seem confusing to the author, there come definite impressions as to what must be done with the play to make it serviceable for a larger public. Ask any author who has had the experience and he will tell you that this is true. Undoubtedly other changes may become necessary when such a play is put into professional performance before a larger public, but only a very smal' proportion of change will be necessary as compared with what otherwise would have been the case. After a

famous play contest a manager said, "The plays are divisible into two great groups — those technically well written with nothing to say that is fresh or significant, and those containing admirable subject matter, with good characterization and dialogue, but so little fitted for the stage that they cannot be considered." Think what a number of organizations like The 47 Workshop, scattered over the country, might do for inexperienced dramatists! What might they not save in profound disappointment to the authors who try rapidly to remake their plays before the public, what in exasperation to managers who have vainly risked tinkering a play into shape before it meets the New York public. History has shown that though certain men and women prefer to do their revising before the general public, most are confused, and some are even made sterile by the sense that so much is at stake and by the intense pressure. Do not the six years of The 47 Workshop show that such an experimental theatre is worth attempting wherever a group of people honestly more interested in the arts of the theatre than in any personal exploitation may be gathered together, and do they not show that with patience and unwillingness to grant defeat their organization is likely to win, after a few years, its place in the community?

It will not hurt any ambitious young playwright to try his hand at every one of the activities connected with such an organization as The 47 Workshop, though it is not easy to make him understand this. If he has shifted scenery, he will

make few, if any, unnecessary demands for elaborate and heavily constructed pieces. When he has had his part in the handling of stage properties, he will not call for them to an unnecessary extent, nor will he clutter his stage with what is artistically undesirable. When he has assisted in lighting, he will be less likely to ask the light man to provide the atmosphere and the subtler gradations of feeling which it is his business to provide by his text. Studying rehearsals, he will better understand the value of the spoken word, and will come to see why it is not wise, as a rule, merely to sketch in his characters, trusting that he can be provided with so admirable a cast that each actor will fill out his part in a way perfectly satisfactory to the somewhat lazy author. Indeed, he will learn a hundred and one details as to the absolute essentiality of writing with actors in mind rather than for a reading public. Never learning all this, many of our authors find themselves relegated to the closet. Of course, such an experimental theatre is at best merely a bridge from inexperience to the wider and still more enlightening experience of production in the professional theatre, but a bridge is a quicker and far more convenient method of crossing a stream than jumping as best one can from stone to stone. The latter way often means a ducking.

Similarly, though probably not to the same extent, such an experimental theatre is of large value to the young man or young woman who hopes ultimately to become manager of a theatre. On a small scale the rudiments of the business may

be learned, and he who would run a theatre effectively and without undue waste must at some time come to understand the elements, at least, of the various arts called on whenever any play is successfully produced. Nothing could be of better promise for the American drama of the next generation than that all over our country young men and women who have learned the rudiments in some experimental theatre should, after necessary years of intervening experience in subordinate positions of the professional theatre, pass on into professional managements. We need badly to develop in this country a group of men and women as nearly corresponding as our conditions will permit to the *intendants* and *régisseurs* of the continental theatres — men and women managing theatres because from their youth they have loved and studied the theatre and the drama; people of cultivation, determined, while they keep the public thoroughly entertained and amused, to give it as much of the best in the past and the present of the drama as their public can be induced to accept. These are the conditions which most speedily will give us American drama able in the number and quality of its plays to hold its own with the drama of older nations. It is for these reasons that the rapid growth of experimental theatres in this country for the past ten years, in spite of some bad mistakes and many failures, has been the most encouraging theatrical sign of the times.

One result from this rapid growth is already clear. These theatres have greatly encouraged the young American dramatist: first, by giving him a

chance to see many plays he would not otherwise have seen which have helped him to standardize his work; and secondly, by offering him an opportunity he would not otherwise have had to be heard and to learn by his mistakes. All this is particularly true of the one-act play. Not long ago we knew it as the curtain-raiser or the after-piece, and all theatrical wiseacres felt sure that a group of one-act plays could not make a successful program. To-day the one-act play in this country is popular, particularly with audiences of the experimental theatres. It is trying to phrase many moods and varied conditions of life. It is attempting many forms, even the freest, in order exactly to put before an audience what the author feels about his subject. Already there is a considerable group of one-act plays written in the last ten years which hold their own reasonably well when compared with the general output in the same period of time of European one-act plays.

The contents of this volume are offered in no way as masterpieces or even as models. They, like the contents of the companion volume of plays first produced by the Harvard Dramatic Club, are certainly interesting as plays originally written in a course in dramatic composition, and after trying out, rewritten under the conditions of The 47 Workshop. They are offered to the general public as a small contribution to the widespread recent accomplishment of the one-act play in this country. They have at least stood the ultimate test of a play — they have been widely given and well liked.

GEORGE P. BAKER.

THREE PILLS IN A BOTTLE

A FANTASY IN ONE ACT

BY

RACHEL LYMAN FIELD

CHARACTERS

TONY SIMS
THE WIDOW SIMS, *his mother*
A MIDDLE-AGED GENTLEMAN
HIS SOUL
A SCISSORS GRINDER
HIS SOUL
A SCRUB WOMAN
HER SOUL

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THREE PILLS IN A BOTTLE

TIME: *Now or then.* PLACE: *Anywhere or nowhere.* SCENE: *A room in the Widow Sims' house. The stage is dim when the curtain rises, but gradually it grows brighter, till the room is full of yellow sunlight, falling in sharp, fantastic patches on floor and walls. The day is so warm that the two windows, a small, high one at the left, and a large one at the back which overlooks the street, are open. Through this we see rows of houses opposite, their pointed roofs and faded colors making a brave showing in the hot sunshine of the street. At the right is a door, opening on the street, and at the back a substantial cupboard with two doors is built into the left corner. Over this is a shelf, containing various small articles — a few toys, some bits of china, etc. A wooden washtub, large and green, stands in the other corner. The only pieces of furniture are a table and two chairs, and a larger chair drawn up close to the window at the back center.*

In this, Tony, the Widow Sims' little ten-year-old boy is sleeping, an old patchwork quilt wrapped about him. His cheeks are very red and there are dark circles under his eyes. At intervals he moves restlessly, muttering vaguely.

Presently the Widow Sims comes tip-toeing in. She is a small, colorless person, with an habitual

air of apology for something — she is not quite sure what! The door creaks to after her, and **Tony opens his eyes.**

WIDOW SIMS [*bending over him regretfully*] Dear, dear, 't is a pity that squeakin' door should 'a waked you. I thought you 'd be sleeping all the morning while I 'm out workin'. [*She kisses him.*]

TONY. Oh, I 'm not sleepy, only hot [*turning his head slowly toward the window*], and all the houses over there are making faces at me!

WIDOW SIMS [*shaking her head*] What a child! [*She sighs and fumbles in her pocket. Then her face brightens as she pulls out a small glass bottle.*] Never mind, Tony, the Doctor 's just been giving me a fine cure for your fever — three days now, and you 'll be well.

TONY. Three days? That 's a long time to wait!

WIDOW SIMS. It 's a very wonderful cure he said. Three pills, one for each day. [*She holds out the pills on the palm of her hand.*]

TONY [*peering at them*] Yes, I can see them, but what will they do to me?

WIDOW SIMS. He said the yellow one will take away all the pain from your head [*dropping it in the bottle*]. Heaven be praised for that! The red one will make you grow tall and strong [*putting back the red one*].

TONY. Tall enough to reach the moon, mother?

WIDOW SIMS. When you take the brown one your eyes will no longer ache [*putting back the*

brown pill] and the near things and the far things will both look very clear.

TONY [*sitting up and reaching for the bottle*] When can I take them? Now?

WIDOW SIMS. No, no. I 'm to give you one each night the first week [*she crosses and puts the bottle on the shelf*] — first the red, then the yellow, and then the brown.

Tony turns away wearily, and the Widow goes to the table, putting some sewing materials in a bag.]

WIDOW SIMS. They 're very grand pills, Tony, and I paid two pounds for them. That 's a great deal for a poor woman like me to pay!

TONY. Is it?

WIDOW SIMS. Three years I 've been saving that, but you don't get much sewing all day, when you 're never a man to come home after a day's work with the silver in his pockets.

TONY. I 've got silver in mine. [*He takes out imaginary money, pretending to pile it on the sill. Widow Sims starts at his words and takes a step towards him, then stops sadly, and goes back to the table with a sigh.*]

WIDOW SIMS. Well, well, I must be off now [*gathering up her things and going toward him*].

TONY [*catching her hand as she passes*] Where are you going to-day? To the big house that is so high up you can see the hills humping themselves up on top of each other, and farther away the sea that stops just where the sky begins?

WIDOW SIMS [*half to herself*] Was ever such a boy for remembering? [*Kneeling by him, and*

wrapping the quilt about him more carefully.] No, it 's not there I 'm going. And what 'll you be doing while I 'm gone? Do you want your picture-book? [*Tony shakes his head.*] Or your glass marble? [*Tony shakes his head again.*] Or your tin whistle?

TONY. No, I don't want any of them. I 'd rather play with my friends.

WIDOW SIMS. Friends?

TONY [*absently*] I have so many friends.

WIDOW SIMS [*with a glance of despair*] Out of his head again. [*She strokes his forehead.*] It 's the fever makes him so queer. [*Brightening a little*] Oh, well, the pills will soon be setting him right! [*She kisses him and turns to go.*] I 'll be back in time to get your dinner. Good-bye, Tony.

TONY. Good-bye, mother.

WIDOW SIMS [*from the doorway*] Mind you keep the coverlet wrapped round you!

[*She exits reluctantly. The sound of her key locking the door is distinctly heard. Tony waves his hand to her as she passes his window, and she throws him a kiss. He sits staring out into the street. Presently steps are heard on the pavement, and the sound of a cane tapping.*]

TONY [*listening*] Oh, someone 's coming — someone with a cane. I can hear it tap-tapping.

[*He leans out to stop the passer-by, who, as we see him through the window, proves to be a tall, portly, middle-aged gentleman of fifty or more, dressed in a beautiful blue coat with wide capes, a green vest over which a gold watchchain is*

draped conspicuously, and a high hat. His air is commanding, and he starts sharply as the little boy accosts him.]

TONY. What a beautiful cane! And the sun shining on its gold top! [*Remembering his manners*] Good-day to you, sir.

GENTLEMAN [*annoyed*] Good-day, yourself.

TONY. Won't you come in and play with me? I 'm all by myself, no one would disturb us.

GENTLEMAN. Most extraordinary young rascal! Do you think I can stop and chat with every impudent little boy I meet? Indeed, no, I have a great deal of business on hand! [*He starts to move on.*]

TONY. What do you have to do?

GENTLEMAN [*not entirely without pride*] I have to settle my accounts.

TONY. What does that mean?

GENTLEMAN. Well, counting my money for one thing. That takes a long time let me tell you!

TONY. You must have a lot of money — as much as two pounds?

GENTLEMAN [*backing away*] Two pounds? *Two pounds*, indeed! Two thousand, and more —

TONY. How did you find it all?

GENTLEMAN. I did n't *find* it. I worked for it — worked hard all day long. [*Shaking his cane emphatically.*] When the lazy fellows were out dancing on the green, or lying on their backs in the meadows, *I* stayed indoors and added long columns of figures, and now, when they have hardly a copper in their pockets, I have nothing to do but count my money! [*He moves away.*]

TONY. Please come in and play?

GENTLEMAN. Certainly not! God bless my soul, I have other things to do! [*He turns to go.*]

TONY. Your—your soul? Why, that wouldn't be busy counting the money, too, would it?

GENTLEMAN. God bless my soul, is the boy crazy? [*Turning on his heel, and laughing skeptically.*] I don't possess such a thing!

TONY. Oh, but you do. You said so twice, —you said [*imitating him*], "God bless my soul."

GENTLEMAN. That was merely an ejaculation.

TONY. I never heard of an ejac— an ejac—, but mother says everyone has a soul.

GENTLEMAN. Rubbish!

TONY [*leaning forward with both hands on the sill*] Oh, if you only would — you won't be using it, you know!

GENTLEMAN [*pounding his cane impatiently*] Rubbish, I said, rubbish!

TONY [*putting his hand out to detain him*] I 'll promise not to keep it long.

GENTLEMAN [*is about to push the hand aside, then seeing Tony's face he pauses and speaks grudgingly in order to get away*] Well, yes, yes, yes, then, but I say frankly I don't know what you mean by all this, and what 's more, I don't believe you do, either! [*Turning with an impatient jerk, and a puzzled shrug of the shoulders*] Good-day to you.

TONY [*calling after him*] Good-bye.

[*The Gentleman passes on up the street, grumbling, thumping his cane and flapping his hand-*

kerchief in annoyance. As he disappears from sight a feeble little cough sounds outside, the door is pushed slowly open, and a little man in dilapidated garments pauses timidly on the threshold. He shuffles in uncertainly, an undersized, underfed, moth-eaten specimen. In his tattered garments he is a ludicrous and half fearful sight. His clothes must, at one time, have resembled the Middle-Aged Gentleman's, but they have fallen into decay; his coat is in rags, the tails of it trail behind him forlornly, and one bare toe protrudes pathetically from his worn shoes. For a moment Tony is half afraid of him.]

GENTLEMAN'S SOUL [*querulously*] Well? [*Tony is still too nonplussed to reply.*] [*Gentleman's Soul, watching him anxiously.*] What are you going to do with me? [*Triumphantly*] I 've got away from him anyway!

TONY. I say, you don't belong to the gentleman who just passed by? The one who has all that money?

GENTLEMAN'S SOUL [*in a thin, complaining whine*] I should say I do, and if ever a soul had a stingy, cross, cantankerous —

TONY. But you can't be *his* Soul! He was big, and he carried the most beautiful cane with a gold top, and you — why, you 're all in rags and tags like a beggar. You 're so little and twisted, your knees knock together, and you 're very pale!

GENTLEMAN'S SOUL [*in a plaintive whine*] Well, whose fault is it if I 'm not handsome? I can't help that!

TONY. I'm sorry, but you did surprise me so! Won't you sit down?

[*The Gentleman's Soul seats himself gingerly, in order not to tear his very tender garments, on a chair. He huddles his knees close together in an effort to hide his rags, tries to smooth his few wild, straggling locks of hair, and wheezes a little, his breath being short.*]

GENTLEMAN'S SOUL. Oh, you don't know the suffering I undergo with that man! Why, you 'd scarcely believe it, but he has n't given me anything to eat for days. Consequently, my whole system is in a state of collapse. If you had n't happened to invite me in to-day, I think, I really think, I could n't have kept on being *his* Soul any longer!

TONY. It must be very hard. Can't you make him do anything for you?

GENTLEMAN'S SOUL [*drawing his chair nearer Tony*] I used to try — when we were younger — before I got in this run-down condition, but he was always thinking of his investments — whether to buy this, or sell that, and adding up one column and then down it again! Even in my younger and healthier days, I could n't distract him, and now — [*He sobs brokenly, and waves his hands in feeble protest.*]

TONY [*still puzzled by his strange attire*] And your clothes are n't a bit like his!

GENTLEMAN'S SOUL. I guess I know that! If you had to wear them, you 'd realize what I endure! [*Pointing to his decadent trousers*] When they first began to get shabby, I begged him to

make me some new ones, but instead he began patching them — see! [*Displaying several faded patches*] That was bad enough, but now he has n't touched them for so long they 're all worn out. I shall be indecent soon! [*His voice breaks pathetically.*]

TONY. I 'm so sorry. Can't we make him do something? Does n't he ever notice you? [*Gentleman's Soul shakes his head dolefully.*]

GENTLEMAN'S SOUL. Never! I 'm going into a decline. [*He coughs consumptively, thumping his chest.*] All for lack of food and clothes, and — and encouragement!

TONY [*affected by seeing him so completely unmanned*] You would n't be so bad if you could just *grow* a little.

GENTLEMAN'S SOUL. Ye-es, but I 'm getting thinner and weaker every day.

TONY [*struck with a bright idea*] If you got bigger and stronger than he is — then he 'd *have* to notice you!

GENTLEMAN'S SOUL. Oh — oh, when he was a boy we were just the same size and we had the pleasantest times together. That was before he took to making money.

TONY. What did you do?

GENTLEMAN'S SOUL. He let me show him things out of doors — squirrels playing in and out of the branches [*he tries feebly to imitate their caperings and the result is pathetic*], and the silk inside chestnut burrs, and pictures in the frost at the roadsides. We could always tell stories, too, — not on paper, you know, but here

[*tapping his forehead meaningly*]. Oh, those were delightful days!

TONY [*enraptured, repeating his former thought*] Now if you grew to be his size, you and he could be like that again.

GENTLEMAN'S SOUL. What 's the use? [*In an abandonment of woe*] Look at me!

TONY [*perplexed*] There ought to be some way. There 's Doctors — they make people well — they give them pills to take. [*At the word "pills," he catches his breath, and glances at the bottle on the shelf.*]

GENTLEMAN'S SOUL. Well, a lot of good that does me, when I have n't any pills.

TONY [*pointing eagerly to the shelf*] But I have! I have a pill that makes people big and strong —

GENTLEMAN'S SOUL [*beating his hands together in tremulous excitement*] Are you sure?

TONY [*nodding*] Mother told me it would. You 'll grow so tall that at night you 'll be able to reach up and pick the stars that have caught in the branches of trees! Oh, I 'm glad I remembered. [*Pointing to the shelf*] You 'll have to climb on a chair to reach them — there in that glass bottle.

With difficulty the Gentleman's Soul drags over a chair, clambers on it feebly, and brings the bottle to Tony.

TONY. A red one she said. [*Taking it out*] Yes, here it is!

GENTLEMAN'S SOUL [*taking it in his hand and scrutinizing it*] You 're a very kind little boy.

TONY. You 're welcome to the pill, and thank you for playing with me.

GENTLEMAN'S SOUL [*bowing shakily*] Perhaps, when I 've got my growth, and he 's all nicely trained again, we 'll be coming to pay you our respects.

TONY. Good-bye.

[*The Gentleman's Soul has scarcely gone out, clasping the pill in his hand, and the sound of his little cough has hardly died away, when a buzzing noise sounds nearby, mingled with the cry:* "Knives to grind. Scissors to grind." *This grows louder and Tony, alert in an instant, leans out the window. A Scissors Grinder appears, a lean, bent fellow, doubled over from the weight of his machine. His face is cracked and brown, with small black eyes; he wears a worn leather apron, a gay handkerchief round his throat, and a battered cap pulled over his forehead.*]

SCISSORS GRINDER. Knives to grind. Scissors to grind. Bring out your knives and scissors! [*He stops by the boy and adds enticingly*] Make 'em nice and sharp for you! [*He swings his machine to the ground and starts it.*]

TONY [*smiling*] Good-day to you. What a funny wheel, it goes so fast! I wish I could make things all sharp and shiny! Oh, Mr. Scissors Grinder, could n't you come in and see me?

SCISSORS GRINDER. Do you think I can waste time where there 's nothing for me to do? I must be moving on hunting for knives and scissors to grind.

TONY. It must be fine to see so many places!

Scissors Grinder. It 's not so bad jogging along out in the country, but — [*making a grimace at the houses across the way*] there are too many houses here, and the pavements are hot and hard — hard on shoe leather too! [*He taps his foot sadly.*]

Tony. But there 's lots of people here, and they 've all got knives and scissors.

Scissors Grinder. They don't make *friends* of their knives and scissors — just throw 'em away when the blades get dull! Well, if you have n't anything for me to sharpen, I must find someone who has!

Tony [*quickly*] If you 're so busy grinding, could n't you let your Soul come in and play with me?

Scissors Grinder [*leaning in and scrutinizing him*] Why, I 'm nothing but a tramp, without a whole shirt to my back, or a piece of silver in my pockets!

Tony. Oh, that does n't matter.

Scissors Grinder. You 're the strangest fellow I ever met! [*Entering into the game*] My Soul! That 's hardly my line of trade, — [*Winking good-naturedly*] not much call for it, you know!

Tony. Oh, but you 're going to?

Scissors Grinder [*assuming a businesslike air*] Yes, to be sure. Now who shall I say wants it?

Tony. Tony Sims, if you please.

Scissors Grinder. Well, Tony Sims, where would you like it put, sir? [*He reaches his arms*

in at the window as if they contained something.] A trifle bulky he is, you know!

TONY. Oh, put him in here, please!

SCISSORS GRINDER. Perhaps he 'd best choose his own place. [*He shakes his head and pretends to take the Soul out again.*] He 's a strong-minded Soul, I warn you, sir, quite unmanageable at times, and who knows that better than I do? [*He gives Tony a grin and a friendly wink, and goes up the street, clanging his bell and calling*] Knives to grind. Scissors to grind. Bring out your knives and scissors!

[*Tony watches the street hopefully, but almost before the Scissors Grinder has gone, the door of the corner-cupboard, behind Tony, swings open, and a man bounds in, whistling. He is tall, nearly twice his master's size, neither very young nor very old; his face is jolly and brown, with twinkling gray eyes, a merrily puckered mouth and a pointed chin. His costume is made out of patches of gay-colored cloth, like a jester's; on its long, fantastic points hang small silver bells which make a tinkling accompaniment to his movements. Upon seeing Tony, he makes a low bow with his hand to his heart. Tony regards him in wonder.*]

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL [*laughing at Tony's expression*] Well, my fine gentleman, what 's the matter with me?

TONY [*hastily recovering himself*] Nothing — that is, I mean, I 'd no idea you 'd be like this!

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL. 'T is a bit of a surprise at first — shock, I might almost say! Honestly, though, I 'm not so bad.

TONY. I should say not!

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL. Of course, my suit is rather striking, but you see there were two kinds of material to start with [*holding out the tails of his jacket, and pointing to the yellow and black*], some bright and some dark, and so, since neither was enough for a whole dress, I put first a patch of yellow and then a piece of black. That was my idea, and don't you like the effect? [*He turns about so Tony may see it from every angle.*]

TONY. It 's beautiful, and your bells sound the way birds do very early in the morning. Where did you get them?

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL [*perching himself on the edge of the table and swinging his legs to and fro*] Whenever I make somebody laugh I can have one. They 're not so easy to get as you 'd think, when Souls so seldom have a chance to show themselves. Not that I 've any objection to my master, though once in awhile he does get in my way! On the whole we 're very happy together.

TONY [*studying him*] You 're much taller than he!

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL [*laughing*] I should say I am! [*He suddenly adds to his height by standing on the table.*] I tell him I may be outgrowing him one of these days!

TONY. Your bells shine so!

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL [*leaping down from the table and across the room*] That 's because I polish them every night with the sunlight I catch during the day.

TONY [*in surprise*] Sunlight?

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL. Oh, sometimes I use bits of star-dust that have strayed down here. It 's a little harder to find, but it keeps them brighter.

TONY. I 've often tried to take hold of sunshine, but it was so slippery!

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL. Yes, I know.

TONY. And I never saw any star-dust at all. Where do you find it?

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL [*confidentially*] In all sorts of places: on window sills; behind shutters; in flower pots; and once, I found some in an ash-barrel in the crookedest alley that ever you saw!

TONY. Do you suppose I could ever find any?

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL. Perhaps, but you have to learn how.

TONY. How?

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL. It 's quite an art. You must really always be on the lookout for it, but you must n't ever seem to be!

TONY. I 'm going to try. [*Thoughtfully*] Do you like being a Scissors Grinder's Soul?

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL. I would n't belong to anyone else! We 're such friends.

TONY [*hesitating*] But he — he was n't like you?

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL. Of course, we are different, but variety, you know, — spice o' life and all that! When he goes out with his machine strapped on his back, I run ahead — up all the hills —

TONY. What do you do that for?

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL [*laughing*] Why to see what 's on the other side, of course!

TONY. And then what?

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL. Oh, then, I look for another hill to climb!

TONY. Are n't you ever tired?

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL. I should say not! Besides, I have other things to do. Whenever I go by an orchard, I must blow on the apples. People wonder and wonder what makes them so red! In the farmhouses where there are little boys and girls, I take care to give the trees a shake, so the children will find plenty on the ground. They never guess who makes the apples fall!

TONY. But I know now! And what does your master do?

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL. Oh, he laughs at the things I tell him. Sometimes I make him songs from the things I see, and he hears them all the time he 's grinding people's knives and scissors.

TONY. Won't you sing me one?

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL. You heard him when he passed just now; what was he singing?

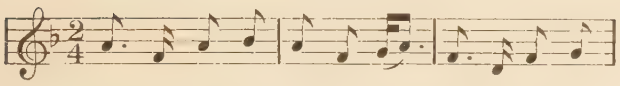
TONY. I did n't hear him sing anything. He just called out [*imitating him*], "Knives to grind. Scissors to grind." Just like that!

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL. Oh, you could n't tell that inside he was really singing a song — my song! I 'll show you what he sang!

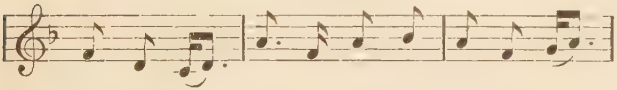
IN A BOTTLE

THE SCISSORS GRINDER'S SONG

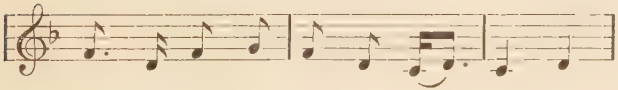
Arranged by CHARLES ROEPPER



All the flow'rs and all the grass, All the stir of
All the house-roofs in the town, Flat or point-ed



wings that pass, Crisp, green leaves that clap their hands,
gray or brown, All the watch-ful win-dow eyes



Winds that blow from oth - er lands, Warm, brown
All the gild - ed spires that rise, Lit - tle

moors and stars that shine, Be - long to me, yes,
folk who fol - low me . . Mine they are, Will

each is mine, On the roads I trav - el O!
al - ways be On the streets I trav - el O!

The Scissors Grinder's Song

All the flowers and all the grass,
All the stir of wings that pass,
Crisp, green leaves that clap their hands,
Winds that blow from other lands,
Warm, brown moors and stars that shine,
Belong to me, yes, each is mine, —
On the streets I travel-O![1]

All the house-roofs in the town
Flat or pointed, gray or brown,
All the watchful window-eyes,
All the gilded spires that rise,
Little folk who follow me, —
Mine they are, — Will always be,
On the streets I travel-O!

TONY [*clapping his hands*] Sing me another, do!

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL [*leaning against the wall, and pressing his hands to his head*] Not — just now.

TONY. What 's the matter?

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL [*with an effort*] Nothing much.

TONY. Have you got a pain?

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL. It 's just my head — that 's always aching.

TONY. I 'm so sorry. Why, I did n't think Souls ever had headache.

[1] The music for this song is given on page 19.

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL [*coming to him apologetically*] I never did in my younger days, but just lately the constant z-z-z of the machine grinding the steel blades has, well, got inside my head, and I can't get it out.

TONY. But I thought the best part about being a soul was that you didn't have to stay with your master all the time! Anyway you don't have to grind things just because he does!

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL. You're right about that, but even souls forget sometimes! Once I let myself listen to nothing but the grinding, and then some of that buzzing got into my head, and there it stays. Serves me right, I suppose, but it is unpleasant. [*He rubs his head ruefully.*]

TONY [*leaning forward and holding out the bottle*] It's lucky you told me — look here!

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL [*taking his head out of his hands*] What's that?

TONY. Just the thing to cure you. See that yellow pill; it will take all the ache out of your head!

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL [*springing up*] If I thought it really would!

TONY. It will; the doctor said so. [*He holds it out and the Soul approaches.*]

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL. But you've only got two! [*He draws back.*] I say, you'd better keep it!

TONY. No, you take it. I guess I don't need it so very much. Besides, there's one left!

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL [*taking the pill*] I'll make you the happiest song anyone ever heard!

TONY. Oh, Mr. Scissors Grinder's Soul, thank you for playing with me. I loved your song, and I 'm going to look for star-dust everywhere!

SCISSORS GRINDER'S SOUL [*kneeling by Tony and taking both his hands*] Oh, I should be thanking you, little boy. When my head is clear again, I shall make a new song, and my master and I will come and sing it to you! [*He shakes his bells and runs joyfully out.*]

TONY [*calling after him*] Good-bye.

[*Tony sings softly to himself, "On the roads I travel O." Soon steps are heard drawing near, and a woman, heavy and poorly dressed, comes by. She carries a tall brush and a bucket on her arm. Her skin is coarse and yellow, and her features thick and blunted. As she shuffles by, Tony hails her.*]

TONY. Good-day to you.

WOMAN. Good-day to you.

TONY. Where are you going?

WOMAN. To my work.

TONY. What do you do?

WOMAN. Oh, sometimes I scrub people's floors, and clean their windows, or wash their clothes. [*Indicating her brush*] I 've got to scrub to-day.

TONY. That 's pretty hard work on a hot day like this!

WOMAN [*leaning on the sill*] It is, indeed — down on my knees slopping soapy water over the floors, and then rubbing it off again! But [*sighing*] when you 've done it as many years as I have you get used to it!

TONY. I wish you 'd stay here with me instead!

WOMAN. Dear me, boy, do you think I 've got time to waste in foolish talk? I 've got my work to do, else where 'd I get the money to buy my bread and tea? [*She moves away.*]

TONY [*quickly*] You 'll send your Soul anyway, won't you?

WOMAN [*coming back with her hand to her ear*] What was that you said? I must be losing my hearing!

TONY. Your Soul —

WOMAN [*incredulously*] Wants my Soul, does he?

TONY. If you please.

WOMAN [*chuckling*] Indeed, if that 's all you want, you 're welcome to it! Only don't be forgetting to send it back to me! Good-day to you!

[*She goes off, the flapping sound of her shoes echoing as she passes up the street. Tony looks hopefully towards the door, but it does not open. Instead, out of the washtub steps a small figure dressed in soft and fluttering green. This little person dances about on the tips of her toes, her green garments catching the light and shimmering. She advances towards Tony, who gazes at her speechless. She resembles a fairy, perhaps a distant relative of the Irish Leprecauns, so small and dainty is she, with a green cap on her head like a flower turned upside down, and little white hands that seem to have a language all their own.*]

TONY [*gasping*] You — you are n't hers?

WOMAN'S SOUL [*laughing with a sound such as you may have heard when you have put your ear*

close to harebells] Yes, I am, don't you like me? [*She makes him a pirouette and curtsy.*]

TONY [*recovering himself*] Why, why I think you're the most beautiful Soul I've ever seen!

[*The Woman's Soul blows him a kiss as she takes gay little runs about the room.*]

TONY. No one would ever have thought you belonged to her!

WOMAN'S SOUL. That's the delightful part about Souls — people can never tell what we are like!

TONY. I'm sure she can't dance — her feet were so big, and in such queer, flapping shoes!

WOMAN'S SOUL. Of course she can't! She has n't got dancing feet; hers are much too clumsy. But she's got a dancing Soul — that's me — and I'm far more satisfactory! When she's down on her knees on those wet floors, or scrubbing the dirty clothes [*here she illustrates the process*], she just has to call and I come and dance for her!

TONY. How she must love you!

WOMAN'S SOUL. She says she could n't live without me! I leave her sometimes, though never for very long!

TONY. Where do you go then?

WOMAN'S SOUL. Oh, I go back to visit the place where she lived when I first came to be her Soul — far away, over the great green hills where the pastures go down to the sea.

TONY. I saw the sea once from a high window. Oh, I'd like to visit that country! What do you do there?

WOMAN'S SOUL. First, I kiss the tips of all the little fir trees, to make them grow, and I find the tiny fairy houses she and I built once. Then I run and skip in the dew, and I hunt for little yellow mushrooms. They are really gold buttons if people only knew and would n't swallow them!

TONY. I 'll remember not to!

WOMAN'S SOUL. Sometimes I lie down by little slate-gray pools hidden among tall grasses, and I push the grass aside, so the sky can reach those little pools and make them blue again. [*She lies down and shows him how she does all this.*]

TONY. Are there any people there?

WOMAN'S SOUL. I was just coming to them. There 's a small village higher up above the downs, where she used to live. I go there sometimes, and then I can tell her what all the people she knew are doing: how Phillip's and Kate's rose-bush has climbed to their roof; how Dick and Molly have a new, blue-eyed baby to sleep in the little yellow cradle by the doorway; how Nancy keeps on gathering herbs for the sick ones; and old Peter still sits on his bench watching for the herring to come back to his weirs. [*The Woman's Soul turns away, rubbing her eyes as if they hurt her.*]

TONY. What 's the matter? You 're not crying, are you?

WOMAN'S SOUL [*shaking her head*] My eyes hurt me; that 's all.

TONY. Is it because the day 's so warm, or because you 're staying here instead of going to her country?

WOMAN'S SOUL. No, they 're always aching.

TONY. But what makes them?

WOMAN'S SOUL [*hurriedly, ashamed to confess it*] Well, you see, once when she was scrubbing floors, she asked me to dance for her, but I felt lazy and would n't. Then some of the soapsuds flew in my eyes, and I can never wash them all out!

TONY. That 's too bad, I don't like to see your eyes get all red, and the soap must make them smart.

WOMAN'S SOUL [*rubbing them*] It does!

TONY [*picking up the bottle and eying the remaining pill doubtfully*] Maybe the pain 'll go away.

WOMAN'S SOUL. Oh, you don't know those soapsuds — they 're in to stay!

TONY. Do they hurt a whole lot?

The Woman's Soul nods and Tony gives a last look at the pill.

TONY [*slowly*] I 've got a pill that would take the pain right out.

WOMAN'S SOUL [*rising quickly*] Do you mean that?

TONY [*holding it out*] My mother brought it to me — here it is. [*With an effort*] You — you can have it.

WOMAN'S SOUL [*bending over him, and seeing the empty bottle*] But you have n't any more — I could n't take your last!

TONY [*thrusting it in her hand*] No, you take it. Perhaps I 'll get another!

WOMAN'S SOUL [*kissing him*] I 'll never forget

what you have done, and the next time I go to the country over the hills, I shall bring you back a whole bunch of harebells full of dew!

[*She disappears into the tub. Tony looks apprehensively at the empty bottle. Soon his mother goes by, unlocks the door and comes in. She goes to Tony, feeling of his head and hands.*]

Widow Sims. Did you go to sleep the time I was gone?

Tony [*chuckling at the remembrance*] I should say not! I had such a lot to do.

Widow Sims [*taking off her bonnet*] Why whatever do you mean, Tony?

Tony. All the ones who came in to play with me.

Widow Sims. Came right in, did they, when I locked the door myself? 'T was only dreams came in to you!

Tony [*firmly, pointing to the chair and table*] They sat right there.

Widow Sims [*shaking her head*] Then it 's high time you took the first pill. [*She goes to the shelf, and gives a start at not finding it. Then she searches more thoroughly.*] I 'd have sworn I put it here with my own hands. Tony, you 've not seen the bottle the Doctor gave me?

Tony [*guiltily*] Here it is, mother.

Widow Sims [*stands back mystified, looking from Tony to the shelf in bewilderment*] He could n't have reached it, not even on a chair, he 's that weak. Queer what tricks thi..gs 'll play on a body! [*Going to Tony*] Come, dear, give it to me. [*She takes up the bottle, stares at it,*

giving it a shake to be sure it is really empty.] They 're gone — [*Crying out*] Tony, Tony, what have you done with them?

TONY [*nervously*] I — I —

WIDOW SIMS. You never were one to meddle or play tricks — have you hid them or swallowed —

TONY [*simply*] I gave them away to three friends of mine.

[*The Widow looks at him for a moment, speechless, then she sits down heavily on a chair, covering her face with her apron.*]

WIDOW SIMS [*weeping*] Tony, Tony, what is it you 're saying?

TONY. I 'm sorry, but they did need them.

WIDOW SIMS. What have you done? They would 'a cured you of the fever. It 'll be burning you all up now, and where 'll I ever get another two pounds to buy you more? Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do? [*She begins to sob despairingly.*]

TONY. I don't mind, mother, and you should have seen how grateful they were!

WIDOW SIMS. There he goes again; oh, deary me, what 's to become of him now? [*Tony looks distressed, then his face brightens as he hears in the distance the Scissors Grinder's cry. It is more a happy chant than before and swells to a kind of pæan of happiness.*]

SCISSORS GRINDER. Knives to grind. Scissors to grind.

TONY [*leaning out to listen*] Do you hear that, mother? [*She pays no heed.*]

SCISSORS GRINDER [*nearer*] Knives to grind. Scissors to grind.

TONY. Listen, he 's singing his thanks for the pill!

SCISSORS GRINDER [*still nearer*] Knives to grind. Scissors to grind.

TONY [*delightedly*] I knew it would cure his headache!

SCISSORS GRINDER [*still nearer and triumphant*] Bring out your knives and scissors!

TONY. Oh, mother, is n't it a fine song?

WIDOW SIMS [*wringing her hands*] Whatever do you mean, Tony? I can't hear a thing but that old Scissor Grinder's ugly noise! [*Scissors Grinder's voice, more distantly*] Knives to grind. Scissors to grind.

TONY. But you 're not listening. He said he 'd make me the happiest song he could, but I never thought he 'd be well so soon!

SCISSORS GRINDER. Knives to grind. Scissors to grind. Bring out your knives and scissors!

[*Tony listens till the cry dies away. Widow Sims rises, and goes to Tony, taking his face between her hands. Then she moves to the table, sobbing, and tries to go on with her work. Tony watches her. Suddenly the Scrub Woman appears at the window, a bunch of flowers in her hands. These she thrusts in front of Tony.*]

TONY. Oh, I know where they came from! They grew in your country over the hills in the pastures by the sea!

WOMAN. What a queer boy! How did you guess?

TONY. Did you think I 'd forget so soon?

WOMAN [*to the Widow Sims*] My sister sent them to me from my old home. I 've brought some for your little boy.

TONY. Here is a harebell. I knew she 'd bring me one!

WIDOW SIMS. You're very kind to him. Thank her for them, Tony.

WIDOW SIMS [*to the Woman*] Talks like that all day, he does.

TONY. And there is, there is, a drop of dew on it!

WOMAN. Well, now but suppose that was just a drop from my soapsuds?

TONY. Oh, I know better than that! *She* said it would be full of dew!

WIDOW SIMS. Just listen to him, will you?

TONY. I 'm glad the pill took the pain out of her eyes. Now she can go back to your country, and dance for you all the time, and her eyes won't ever smart any more!

WOMAN [*turning to go*] Well, I hope you 'll be feeling better in the morning. [*To the Widow*] Queer how the fever makes them act. [*She goes up the street.*]

TONY [*fondling the harebell*] See, mother, it can dance just the way her Soul did! [*At this the Widow sobs afresh, burying her face in her apron. Just as her wailing grows loud, the noise of a cane tap-tapping sounds on the pavement, and the Gentleman in the blue coat and high hat comes by.*]

TONY [*calling to him*] I hope he 's grown very tall by now.

GENTLEMAN [*starting and coming to the window*] God bless my soul!

TONY. You will play with him sometimes, and not count your money all the time? [*At this the Widow cries more loudly.*]

GENTLEMAN [*thumping his cane*] What 's all this noise? I never heard such a racket!

WIDOW SIMS. They 're lost, lo-st —

GENTLEMAN. What 's lost? Speak up, woman.

WIDOW SIMS. Some pills, sir.

TONY. They 're not lost. I gave them away. Your Soul took one himself, don't you remember?

GENTLEMAN [*to the Widow*] Don't blubber so! Is that boy crazy?

WIDOW SIMS. No, sir, it 's the fever makes him talk so. [*Beginning to sob again.*] The pills would 'a cured him; now he 'll die of the fever. Oh, what shall I do-o —

GENTLEMAN. Rubbish! [*Thumping his cane and addressing the Widow*] Go to the Doctor's for more of those confounded pills. And — *STOP THAT NOISE!*

WIDOW SIMS. I 've got no more money.

GENTLEMAN. You 're a lazy, good-for-nothing, thriftless —

WIDOW SIMS. Oh, no, sir, I work hard all day, but I 'm a poor widow. [*The Gentleman turns on his heel, tries to go away, and then wheels about. Fumbling in his pocket, he awkwardly draws out some money which he lays on the window-sill.*]

GENTLEMAN. There, take that — and for

Heaven's sake — *STOP THAT RACKET!* [*He stumps off, muttering. The Widow hurries to the window and leans out, calling after him.*]

WIDOW. Oh, thank you, sir! God bless you, sir! [*Dropping on her knees by Tony*] Tony, Tony, now I can buy you three more pills!

TONY [*smiling to himself*] His Soul must have grown *very big!*

CURTAIN

"THE GOOD MEN DO"

AN INDECOROUS EPILOGUE

BY

HUBERT OSBORNE

"The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones"
JULIUS CAESAR, iii. 2.

CHARACTERS

DR. JOHN HALL. . Son-in-law to Wm. Shakespeare
THE REV. JOHN WARD. . Vicar of Trinity Church
JENKYNS. . . . . A schoolmaster
ANNE HATHAWAY
MISTRESS SUSANNA HALL } Daughters to
MISTRESS JUDITH QUINEY } William Shakespeare
MISTRESS WHATELEY
THE NURSE

First produced by The 47 Workshop, November 16 and 17, 1917.

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"THE GOOD MEN DO"

PLACE: "*New Place*," *Stratford-on-Avon.* TIME: *April 23, 1616.*

SCENE: *A living room. The walls are of oak beams with plaster between; the ceiling is beamed.*

At one side of the room is a fireplace. Beyond this is a door leading to the hall, into which opens the front door of the house. At the back of the room is a large door opening into an inner room; opposite the fireplace is a door leading to other parts of the house; above this is a large leaded window.

Near the fireplace is an oaken chest; at the back of the room is a cupboard; in front of the window are a writing desk and chair. Near the center of the room are a table and three chairs.

On the table are three pewter mugs, pewter dishes, and an oaken flagon; on the desk are a trinket box, an ink pot in which stands a crimson quill pen, and a book. There are curtains at the window.

There is an air of neatness about the room which suggests that the owner might have recently put it in order before going on a journey.

When the curtain rises the dimly lighted stage is empty. A fire burns in the fireplace; a ray of sunlight steals through the drawn curtains and falls across the floor.

In the distance a clock chimes the hour, then strikes seven.

The Nurse enters from the hall carrying some branches of apple blossoms in her arms. She is a large, motherly person of at least seventy. She goes to the door at the back of the room and opens it.

In the inner room is seen a bed on which lies the body of a man; two lighted candles stand at the foot of the bed.

The Nurse lays the apple blossoms on the bed, looks about the room, and moves the candles a little nearer the bed.

Jenkyns, the local schoolmaster, enters from the hall. He is a man of seventy.

JENKYNS [*in a hushed tone*] Nurse!

NURSE [*coming from the inner room*] Aye, Master Jenkyns.

JENKYNS. Has anyone been here since I left?

NURSE. No.

JENKYNS. His daughters should have come by now.

NURSE. Aye, they 've had time.

JENKYNS [*pointing to the inner room*] Have you done all in there?

NURSE. Aye.

JENKYNS [*going to the door and looking in at the dead man*] You 've laid him out in his taffeta doublet!

NURSE. Aye, Master Shakespeare was fond o' it — a' always wore it o' journeys. [*She closes the door to the inner room.*]

JENKYNS. He told me it was made in London town.

NURSE. Aye, just afore a' came back to live in Stratford.

JENKYNS. It must have cost a lot of money.

NURSE. A' was never thrifty o' his gold.

JENKYNS. He was open-handed even as a lad.

NURSE. That a' was. [*She takes up the dishes from the table, leaving the mugs and flagon.*] I 'd best set about tidying the house. [*She points to the inner room*] I 've been busy in there since a' passed away.

JENKYNS. I 'll wait the others here. [*He sits at the table.*]

Exit Nurse.

[*Mistress Judith Quiney enters from the hall. She is a kindly looking woman of thirty-two.*]

JENKYNS [*rising*] Judith!

JUDITH. You were here — at the end?

JENKYNS. Yes. Your father asked for you just before he breathed his last.

JUDITH. I would I had been here, but Dr. Hall did not think the end so near and would not have Susanna and myself risk the night air to come.

JENKYNS. Yes. 'T was sudden.

The Nurse reënters

NURSE [*seeing Judith*] Mistress Quincy!

JUDITH. Nurse! [*She takes off her hat and cloak.*]

NURSE. Give 'em to me. I 'll put 'em by. [*She takes the hat and cloak from Judith.*]

JUDITH. Thanks. *Exit Nurse.*

JENKYNS. Is your sister coming?

JUDITH. She started out with me, but stopped to leave Betty with her Aunt. 'T would not be well for the child to be here at such a time.

JENKYNS. No. 'T is no place for children with the dead.

JUDITH. She 'll miss the stories father used to tell her.

JENKYNS. He thought of such odd tales.

JUDITH. She seemed to understand.

[*Mistress Susanna Hall enters from the hall. She is a large, handsome woman of thirty-five — a dominating personality.*]

SUSANNA. Master Jenkyns!

JENKYNS. Susanna!

JUDITH. Sister!

SUSANNA. Judith! [*Turning to Jenkyns, her manner patronizing*] The Doctor tells me you have been most kind in this sad hour.

JENKYNS. I did what I could for Willie.

SUSANNA. Father always relied on you so. [*To Judith*] John has gone to the Vicar's. He will be here as soon as he has seen him.

The Nurse reënters.

NURSE. Mistress Hall!

SUSANNA. Nurse!

NURSE [*pointing to the inner room*] A' lies in there.

JENKYNS [*to Susanna and Judith*] Come! [*He goes to the door to the inner room and opens it.*]

JUDITH [*going to the door*] Poor father!

JENKYNS. Look! So peaceful.

JUDITH. As if a smile were playing on his lips.

SUSANNA [*in the door, disapprovingly*] Yes. He never treated life with fitting dignity, and meets death with a smile! [*Judith kneels by her father's bed.*]

NURSE. A' made a noble end for a' that.

SUSANNA [*frowning*] Those gay clothes are hardly fitting for a shroud!

NURSE. I think a' wished 'em; a' left 'em out as if to be at hand.

SUSANNA. Very like! He gained strange notions from those player bands. [*Taking off her hat and cloak*] Here, Nurse, put these by.

NURSE [*taking Susanna's things*] Aye, Mistress Hall.

SUSANNA [*seeing the mugs and flagon on the table*] Nurse! What are these?

NURSE [*evasively*] Nothing. They 're from last night.

SUSANNA [*suspiciously*] Were there strangers here?

NURSE. Aye. But they were fine gentlemen, with well-turned legs and —

Judith comes from the inner room, closing the door after her.

SUSANNA [*interrupting the Nurse*] Friends of father's?

NURSE. So I think. They came afore supper and stayed far into the night. Lord, how your

father talked! 'T was wonderful; I could n't understand a word a' said. *Exit Nurse.*

Susanna [*to Jenkyns*] Knew you aught of this?

Jenkyns. I heard they left their horses at the Inn; and from their talk they were from London town. One was called Jonson and the other Drayton, if I remember right.

Susanna [*righteously indignant*] Players!

Judith. Poor father!

Susanna. He 'd promised to forswear their company!

Judith. He tried, but still he could n't put them from his mind.

The Nurse reënters.

Susanna. He was so weak.

Jenkyns. Nay, only thoughtless. He was the same when a boy, but he meant well at heart.

Nurse. Aye, that a' did; a' was a forward lad i' spite o' some 'at said a' was not over bright; a' was different, 'at was all, and some'at sickly.

Jenkyns. Yes, when first he came to me to school I had great hopes for him, but soon he got strange notions in his head that kept him from getting on.

Nurse [*picking up the mugs and flagon*] A' never slept well o' nights.

Susanna [*looking at the mugs*] Did father overdrink last night?

Nurse. Nay, that a' did not — not enough to quench the thirst of a flea burning in hell.

Jupith. He bad been most temperate of late.

JENKYNS. 'T was not sack that brought his fever on.

NURSE. 'T was his scribblings — that was the trouble. He 's always been the same — when the parchment and ink pot came out, then mischief was afoot; a'd sit all night, his eyes shining like stars, as if he looked into another world and saw strange sights.

SUSANNA [*scathingly*] Writing again!

JUDITH. He told me he had started a new play.

JENKYNS. He hoped it would bring honor to his name.

NURSE. Aye; scratch, scratch, scratch [*she rubs the mugs together with a sly look*], until a'd worked a'self into a burning fever. I knew how it would some day end. *Exit Nurse.*

JENKYNS. Is there aught else I can do?

SUSANNA. Thanks, but the Doctor will be here soon.

JENKYNS. I go to meet a boyhood friend of your father's who would look upon his face again. They had not met in years. You 'd not mind if we came here anon? We 'll make no trouble.

SUSANNA [*fatuously*] In this sad hour?

JUDITH [*stopping Susanna*] A friend of father's, Susanna. [*To Jenkyns*] And welcome.

JENKYNS. Thank you, Judith. I 'll be back.

He goes out into the hall.

SUSANNA [*looking about the room*] 'T is very orderly in here for him!

JUDITH [*looking in the cupboard*] Look, everything put to rights!

SUSANNA. So it is.

JUDITH [*going to the desk*] I think he must have felt the end was near. [*Taking up the trinket box*] His trinket box. [*Opening it*] A lock of jet black hair.

[*She takes the lock of hair from the box and shows it to Susanna.*]

SUSANNA [*bitterly*] A remembrance of one of his many loves! [*She looks in the trinket box and takes out a letter.*] Judith, a letter with the royal arms! [*Opening it*] From the King!

JUDITH. The King! How came father by it?

SUSANNA [*in a matter-of-fact tone*] He must have found it somewhere in London. [*Opening the desk*] His will should be in here.

JUDITH. Had he changed it and made mention of mother?

SUSANNA. Yes, a week ago.

JUDITH. Then she 'll not feel so bitter.

SUSANNA [*taking a manuscript from the desk*] Here 's parchments!

JUDITH. What do they say?

SUSANNA [*looking over the manuscript*] There is much written here; but 't is of no consequence — only another play! 'T is not finished yet. Here on the last page is writ [*reads*]: "Does no one understand? Here at the journey's end I find the recompense is — just the quest." [*Putting the manuscript back in the desk*] There is no sense to that. At the journey's end the quest must needs be o'er!

JUDITH. Perhaps he meant his life had been in vain; he had been sad of late.

SUSANNA. Nay, 't is but the vagaries of a failing mind.

JUDITH. But yet — I seem to see.

SUSANNA [*taking another parchment from the desk*] Here is the will.

JUDITH. Aught else?

SUSANNA. No. [*She puts the will back in the desk.*] The desk has been lately put to rights. [*Thinking*] The players here — his best suit put out as if to wear — the cupboard put in order — a new play begun — ! [*Realizing what had been in Shakespeare's mind*] Judith, father was planning to return to London and the theater!

JUDITH. Yes, so it would seem.

SUSANNA. After all we 'd done to make him happy here! [*Bitterly*] Had he not besmirched our name enough already without returning to that sinful life! [*With determination*] Well, 't is o'er; the future rests with us.

JUDITH. Perhaps 't is best the end came when it did.

SUSANNA. Yes, God was kind — to him — and us!

[*Anne Hathaway enters from the hall. She is a woman of sixty.*]

ANNE. Daughters!

SUSANNA [*surprised at seeing her*] Mother!

ANNE. Aye, Sue; draw me a chair by the fire. 'T was a long walk from my cottage and I am cold and tired.

SUSANNA [*taking a chair from the table and placing it before the fire*] Come, rest a while.

ANNE [*sitting*] That 's the good child. [*To Judith*] Well, girl, have you naught to say to your mother?

JUDITH. You — *here!*

ANNE. And why not?

JUDITH. But — father —

ANNE. Aye, "father." You always favored him and took his part against me!

JUDITH. Dear mother!

ANNE. Nay, Judy, 't will do no good to speak. I know how quick you were to leave me and go to your father when he came back here to live in Stratford.

JUDITH. But he was all alone.

ANNE. 'T was well you married and got rid of his bad counselings or you 'd have got like him!

JUDITH. Mother, he did not hate you.

ANNE. Ah, do not talk to me. I know the man he was!

The Nurse reënters.

NURSE [*seeing Anne, surprised*] Mistress Hathaway!

ANNE. "Hathaway" — nay, Mistress Shakespeare! He may have denied me his name as his wife, but he can't stop me enjoying my rights as his widow.

JUDITH. Mother, please!

ANNE. Nurse, prepare the best room for me! [*The Nurse looks questioningly at Judith.*]

ANNE. Well? What are you looking at? This is my husband's house, and I am mistress here!

NURSE. Aye, so I see! *Exit Nurse.*

JUDITH. Mother, he lies in there. [*She points to the inner room.*] Will you not look at him?

ANNE. Look on his face? Nay, that I 'll not. I would I never had! 'T was a sad day for me when Funk Sandells and John Richardson at my father's wish forced him to marry me. [*With an evident relish of combat*] If he 'd had a drop of blood in his liver, he 'd have broke their heads for their pains!

JUDITH. Mother.

ANNE [*garrulously*] But they meant well; they thought it for my good. Aye, and they had to put themselves under surety for forty pounds to the Bishop should it later be found that he had meddled with another lass. [*Amused*] Forty pounds for him; he was not worth the half! [*Spitefully*] 'T was Mistress Whateley's doings. She claimed they were betrothed. [*Humorously*] Would she had got him. I could not wish her worse!

JUDITH. Mother, do not forget; he was our father.

ANNE. Yes, so was he when he kept the house awake nights with his scribblings; so was he when he wrote foul verses to hang on the gates of honest gentry and disgraced our name; so was he when he ran away to London and left you without a thought! Did your father think of you when you were starving and I had to borrow forty shillings of my father's shepherd to buy you food! [*Proudly*] Aye, and I brought him a dower of six pounds, thirteen shillings and four pence! Don't talk to me of your father, girl!

The Nurse reënters.

ANNE. Well, is my room prepared?

NURSE. Aye, 't is ready.

ANNE. I 'll have a look at it. [*Rises.*] And, Nurse, I 'd have some food. I 'm almost famished from my walk.

NURSE. I 'll get you some'at. *Exit Nurse.*

ANNE. Come, Sue, show me the way.

SUSANNA. Yes, mother.

Exeunt Anne and Susanna.

[*Judith stands looking into the fire.*]

Jenkyns reënters from the hall, with Mistress Whateley, a woman of fifty, small and frail, her face still retaining much of its youthful beauty; she is a "Viola" grown old.

JENKYNS. Come, we are alone. He lies in there.

JUDITH [*hearing Jenkyns' voice*] Master Jenkyns!

JENKYNS. Yes, Judith!

JUDITH. You 've brought my father's friend?

JENKYNS [*turns to go, motioning Mistress Whateley to follow him*] We 'll come back later.

JUDITH. You may see him now. [*Turning and seeing Mistress Whateley*] Mistress Whateley!

MISTRESS WHATELEY. You *know.*

JUDITH. Yes.

MISTRESS WHATELEY. Do not make me go until I see him once again.

JUDITH. But, mother!

MISTRESS WHATELEY. She can't deny me that.

I have not seen him since — since we walked in Arden Wood. 'T was spring; the May in bloom as it is now; the moon was stealing through the evening mists; a nightingale was singing in the copse; and then they came — and took him from me.

JUDITH. The night he wed my mother.

MISTRESS WHATELEY. I did not mean to bring that to your mind.

JUDITH. 'T is not a pleasant story.

MISTRESS WHATELEY [*coming to Judith*] Let me look at you. You favor him. You have your father's eyes. I 've heard you loved him dearly. So did I. The love we both bear him should be a bond between us. Can't we be friends?

JUDITH. I think we are.

MISTRESS WHATELEY. Judith. [*She takes Judith's hands in hers.*] Then I may see him?

JUDITH. Master Jenkyns will take you.

JENKYNS. Come. [*He leads Mistress Whateley to the inner room. Judith follows them and stands in the doorway. The chimes strike the quarter hour. Anne is heard approaching. Judith closes the door to the inner room.*]

Anne and Susanna reënter.

ANNE. Where is the Nurse? Would she let me starve?

JUDITH. She 'll be here presently.

ANNE. Presently, huh! This house is badly run. When I take hold there 'll be some change, you 'll see!

JUDITH. Do you like your room?

ANNE. 'T will do, though somewhat dark. The mulberry tree by the window keeps out the sun. I 'll have it cut away.

SUSANNA. We 'll talk about that later, mother, dear.

ANNE [*defiantly*] That we shall! [*Garrulously*] The stairs are dusty; the hallway 's not in good repair. I 'm disappointed in the place. 'T is not so grand in spite of all Will's airs! I 'd as leave have my cottage.

SUSANNA. I 'm sure you would, mother. You 've lived there so long you 'd not be happy long away.

ANNE [*suspiciously*] Ah, think you so, Sue?

SUSANNA. 'T will make a pleasant change for you to come here and visit for the day.

ANNE. Visit, say you?

SUSANNA. You must come often. The Doctor 's always glad to have you with us.

ANNE [*her anger rising*] That 's kind of him!

SUSANNA. And Betty loves to have you.

ANNE. Yes?

SUSANNA. This is a fitting house for one of John's position, and well located.

ANNE [*shrewishly*] So, Sue, you have your mind upon the place!

SUSANNA. You 'd not be happy here; 't would make you think of him!

ANNE [*sneeringly*] You 're growing very thoughtful of my happiness. [*With determination*] But here I am, and here I stay!

SUSANNA. Now, mother!

ANNE. I see you have your plans all made!

SUSANNA [*seeing that tact will be of no avail*] Father wished me to live here!

ANNE [*angrily*] Girl, I 'll have you know this is my house!

SUSANNA [*showing some of her mother's shrewishness*] Think you so?

ANNE. 'T is mine by my dower rights!

SUSANNA. No, mother, it is not!

ANNE. And why, I 'd like to know?

SUSANNA [*deliberately*] Because it 's mine!

ANNE [*jumping up*] You lie, you fro'ard wench; you lie!

SUSANNA [*with aggravating composure*] Mother, be calm; these scenes are out of place!

ANNE. "Be calm!" "Be calm!" while I am robbed by my own flesh and blood — by one I 'd scrimped and starved to feed! "Be calm," say you! Ah! there 's your father speaking in you now! [*With cunning*] How came you by the house? Aye, tell me that?

SUSANNA. Father left it to me by his will.

ANNE [*flaring up*] I 'll not believe it without proof! [*Self-pityingly*] But what could I expect? He 's always been the same. When he bought his house in Blackfriars, he barred my dower in the bill of purchase, and now he 'd take the roof from o'er my head!

SUSANNA. You have your cottage.

ANNE. A plague upon my cottage! Get I naught of his? What of New Place here; his land hard by, a hundred and seven acres if there 's a foot; his house in Henley Street; his interest in

the tithes; his property in London? Get I none of these?

JUDITH [*trying to pacify her*] Father changed his will a week ago and made mention of you in it.

ANNE [*hopefully*] Now, did he that? At last he had some shame! What did he leave me?

SUSANNA. He did not tell me.

ANNE. Well, where 's the will? [*Greedily*] I 'd see what I do get!

JUDITH [*getting the will from the desk*] I 'll fetch it, mother.

ANNE. Quick, girl, quick!

JUDITH. Here it is.

ANNE [*petulantly*] You know I cannot read.

SUSANNA. Give it to me. [*She takes the will from Judith.*]

ANNE. Tell me what it says.

SUSANNA. Let me see.

ANNE. Yes.

SUSANNA. Here 's your name.

ANNE. Go on! Go on!

SUSANNA [*reads*] "I give to my wife — "

ANNE. Why do you pause? Is it something you want for yourself?

SUSANNA [*reads*] "I give to my wife my second best bed, with the furniture."

ANNE. You read not true.

SUSANNA. 'T is written here.

ANNE. Let me see.

SUSANNA. Look — here. [*She points out the line.*] Written in between the lines.

ANNE [*in a towering rage*] His second best bed! I 'll not believe it. Would that I could read!

'T is some jest you play; — but, yet, 't is like his tricks. Oh, woe is me. I am a jilted wife — the scorn of womankind! I warrant it was a bed he never slept in! And were he still alive he 'd never sleep again in peace. I 'd see to that. Nor shall he rest in peace within the grave! My curse shall rest upon him! I 'll recall his past and make his name again a by-word here in Stratford!

Mistress Whateley and Jenkyns come from the inner room on hearing Anne's angry voice.

ANNE. The lying knave; the tavern lout; a poacher, banished hence; a player; a rogue; a vagabond!

MISTRESS WHATELEY. Anne, stop!

SUSANNA. Mistress Whateley!

ANNE [*turning on her*] You! — Get you gone! Get you gone, I say!

MISTRESS WHATELEY. Not yet. [*There is something in her simple dignity that quiets Anne.*] Anne, I said naught to you when you took him from me. For thirty-five years I 've held my peace, but now I do not go until I 've had my say!

ANNE. You think to shame me — to turn my daughters' love to hate? Well, we 'll see. I can give as good as you.

MISTRESS WHATELEY. I know your waspish tongue of old. 'T will do no good to use it now.

ANNE [*changing her tack*] You come to taunt me when my heart is broke. Oh, what I 've had to suffer through that man — his lack of kindliness, his lawless ways.

MISTRESS WHATELEY. Had you not meddled in his life his story would be different.

ANNE. Meddled! I? [*Relishing the thought of her past conquests.*] 'T was he that did the meddling. With honied words made me forget my maiden modesty; and when he 'd wrought the wrong, 't was right that he should save me from disgrace.

MISTRESS WHATELEY. Made you, Anne! Do not lie unto yourself. Made you! He a lad of seventeen and you a grown woman!

ANNE [*flaring up*] A grown woman! She taunts me with my age!

MISTRESS WHATELEY. You tricked him into marrying you, knowing that he did not love you. You made no home for him that loved the little niceties of life, but made him live in squalor. You drove him from you by your nagging tongue to taverns and low company. Your jealous tantrums made banishment a happy liberty!

ANNE. I did not drive him hence. He always wished for London and its easy, sinful ways, the lazy lout!

MISTRESS WHATELEY. Easy! There alone, without friends, without money, he could not choose his work but needs must take what first should come to hand. If that was the theater I cannot hold him wrong. It was the only means he had to live. You were his wife. You could have helped him much. Your love should have been the inspiration of his life and spurred him on to honorable fame. Instead, you drove him to his worst and wrecked the promise of his youth.

What he was you made him. What sins are his, they are upon your head. [*Her strength is spent.*] Master Jenkyns, take me home. [*She takes Jenkyns' arm weakly.*]

Exeunt Mistress Whateley and Jenkyns.

ANNE [*turning on Susanna and Judith in her rage*] Nice daughters, you, to leave me to her wrath. I who never did a person harm! And this is my reward. [*She starts to cry.*]

JUDITH. Nay, mother, do not fret.

ANNE. And if I do, who cares!

The Nurse reënters

NURSE. The Doctor 's coming up the path.

SUSANNA [*quite composed*] Thank you, Nurse, we 'll wait him here.

NURSE. Aye. *Exit Nurse.*

JUDITH. John 's coming, mother; dry your eyes.

ANNE. I have good cause to weep — a widow — left alone!

SUSANNA [*sharply*] Come, try to make some show of dignity!

Dr. Hall enters, a thickset, smug, solid, middle-class Englishman of about forty.

DR. HALL [*importantly*] I come from the Vicar.

JUDITH. Would he listen?

SUSANNA [*fatuously*] John's position, as leading physician of Stratford, would have much weight, I 'm sure.

DR. HALL [*smugly*] I think it did, my dear.

[*To the others*] The Vicar was most kind and will help us in every way he can to quiet talk of the circumstances of your father's marriage, his banishment from here, and his life in London. As tithe owner he is privileged to be buried within the church; to this the Vicar will make no objection. And his advice is to destroy all evidence of your father's connection with the theater.

SUSANNA. That is wisely said.

DR. HALL. Then let us now begin. Have you been through his effects?

SUSANNA. He had put everything to rights.

DR. HALL. That is well; 't will save much trouble.

SUSANNA. His will and an unfinished play is all we found.

DR. HALL. He, too, must have wished the past forgot.

ANNE. And so he might.

DR. HALL. Let me have the will.

ANNE. Yes, look at it and see the shame he 's put upon me!

JUDITH [*getting the will and the play from the desk*] Here it is, and the unfinished play.

DR. HALL [*taking the will*] I 'll keep the will. Put the play by. [*Judith lays the play on the table.*] The Vicar will be here presently to read a prayer.

ANNE. And why should he do that?

DR. HALL. As Master Shakespeare did not receive the last rites of the Church, I thought it would look well and cause favorable report.

ANNE. Favorable report of him, and what of

me? Aye, tell me that? Shall I be painted as a shrewish wife while him you hold up as a model man — a true, kind, loving and long-suffering husband! Is that your plan? Well, that you 'll not. I 'll tell his wilfulness unto the world and let them know the kind of man he was!

JUDITH [*trying to quiet her*] Mother.

ANNE. You heard me, girl.

DR. HALL. You were his wife. What differences you had you should have hid within the family walls and shown an outward sign of amity and love, not aired your grievance to a tattling world and lain your children open to much shame.

ANNE. What shame there was, is his. You all know that.

SUSANNA. Our family scandal is an old wives' tale retold by gossips round the winter fire.

ANNE [*proudly*] Aye, that it is.

DR. HALL [*frowning on Anne*] With him it shall be buried. Mark you that!

ANNE [*whimpering*] Blame me; blame me! There 's none to take my part!

SUSANNA. Mother! Peace, I pray!

DR. HALL [*turns away, and going to fireplace, notices the chest*] What 's in the chest?

JUDITH. I do not know.

SUSANNA. We did not look.

DR. HALL. 'T were well we do so now. [*Opens the chest.*] There 's much within. [*He takes out the costume Shakespeare wore as "Adam" in "As You Like It."*]

JUDITH. A shepherd's smock.

ANNE. Fine clothes for London, huh!

DR. HALL [*taking out the costume worn as the "Ghost" in "Hamlet"*] Here 's more.

JUDITH [*lifting it up*] 'T is strange — covered with gauze! What should he use that for?

DR. HALL. I 've heard he played a ghost in one of his plays. [*He takes a woman's dress from the chest.*]

SUSANNA. A woman's dress!

ANNE. Aye, one of some trollop that he dallied with! And yet you 'd make me hold my peace!

DR. HALL. There are no woman players.

ANNE. He 'd go afield to find a dame!

JUDITH. We had best put them back.

ANNE. You cannot leave those sinful things about the house.

JUDITH. I 'd like to keep them; they were father's.

DR. HALL. They were a part of his shameful life. We had best burn them.

SUSANNA. Yes. But put the dress by. It would make over well for Betty. Burn the rest.

JUDITH. What else is there?

DR. HALL [*going back to the chest*] Look, parchments! [*He takes out a bundle of parchments and throws them on the floor. The others gather around as Dr. Hall takes manuscript after manuscript from the chest and tosses them on the floor.*]

SUSANNA [*looking at one of the manuscripts*] Why, it 's a play! [*Looking at another*] And so is this. [*Looking at several*] They must be father's plays. [*Reading from a manuscript*] "Twelfth Night or What You Will." [*Turning*

the pages, reads] "She sat like patience on a monument, . . ."

ANNE. 'T is foolish trash.

SUSANNA [*turning another page, reads*] "Too old, by heaven, let still the woman take an elder than herself: . . ."

ANNE. An elder! Did he write that? Even from the grave he taunts me with my age!

The Nurse reënters

NURSE. The Vicar is without.

DR. HALL. Show him in.

NURSE. Aye. *Exit Nurse.*

SUSANNA [*pointing to the clothes and the manuscripts*] Put them back. Don't let the Vicar see them.

DR. HALL. There is no time.

[*The others set themselves to rights to receive the Vicar fittingly. Anne is on the point of bursting out in a tirade against her late husband, but is silenced by the frowns of the others.*]

The Nurse reënters, followed by the Rev. John Ward, Vicar of Trinity Church, Stratford.

THE VICAR [*nodding to each*] Susanna, Judith, Mistress Shakespeare. [*When Anne is addressed as "Mistress Shakespeare" her face beams.*] Ah, you are all gathered here in grief, so let me bring the comfort that I may. The Doctor 's told me all, and I feel deeply with you; and though my calling bids me tell the truth, my heart wou'd temper it with charity and let the scandal of your father's life be buried with him in the grave. Although an

actor, without the law, without the Church, the burial will be with the full service for the dead, as with peace-departed souls. His last few years in Stratford have done much to quiet talk of what had gone before and justify me in the course that I shall take. And you must bend your thoughts to build a pretty legend round his life, of honor, truth, and simple loyalty.

ANNE. Ah-h-h. [*The others quiet her with their looks.*]

THE VICAR. No fitter monument can you erect to him you all held dear than the report of good repute after his death. [*To Dr. Hall*] Take me where he lies and I will read a prayer to rest his soul. Come, join me, all.

[*Dr. Hall leads The Vicar to the inner room, Judith and the Nurse follow. The chimes strike the half-hour. Susanna and Anne start to go, but seeing the pile of manuscripts, go over to it. Susanna picks up first one and then another of the manuscripts, looking them over with curiosity.*]

THE VICAR [*within*] "I am the resurrection and the life saith the Lord, he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that believeth in me shall never die."

ANNE. And now they pray for him. Bah!

THE VICAR. "Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

ANNE [*kicking at the manuscripts with her toe*] What will you do with these things?

SUSANNA. They should be destroyed.

THE VICAR. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked."

ANNE. Aye, that they should!

THE VICAR. "God is not unrighteous that he will forget your works and the labor that proceedeth of love; — "

JUDITH [*coming to the door from the inner room, to Susanna and Anne*] Come.

ANNE. Nay, that I 'll not.

JUDITH. Please, go in.

ANNE. Well. [*She goes up to the door.*]

THE VICAR. "Come unto me all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you."

ANNE [*in the door, turning to Susanna and Judith*] But I 'll not pray! *Exit Anne.*

THE VICAR. "In the midst of life we are in death, of whom may we seek for succor but of thee, O Lord, who for our sins art justly displeased."

[*Judith watches Susanna as she reads the manuscripts.*]

THE VICAR. "Ye that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins and are in love and charity with your neighbors, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God — "

SUSANNA. Judith, listen!

THE VICAR. "And walk henceforth in holy ways — "

JUDITH. Yes.

THE VICAR. "Draw near with faith — "

[*Judith closes the door, shutting out the voice of the Vicar, and comes to Susanna.*]

SUSANNA [*reads*] "The evil that men do lives

after them; the good is oft interred with their bones."

JUDITH. Yes, the evil does live.

SUSANNA. But we can help to bury it.

JUDITH. Susanna!

SUSANNA. Judith, that is a message from father to us; he feared the evil of his life would live after him and wished that we destroy all knowledge of it.

JUDITH. I wonder?

SUSANNA. That is as the Vicar advised.

JUDITH. Yes, it is; but — [*Dr. Hall opens the door to the inner room.*]

DR. HALL. Come, the Vicar 'll think it strange.

SUSANNA. We 'll be there presently.

Exit Dr. Hall.

THE VICAR. "Man that is born of woman hath but a short time to live and is full of misery, he cometh up and is cut down like a flower, he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay."

JUDITH. What shall we do?

THE VICAR. "If any man sin he hath an advocate with the Father, and he is the propitiation for our sins. Lift up your hearts."

DR. HALL, ANNE, AND NURSE [*within, in response*] "We lift them up unto the Lord."

THE VICAR. "Let us give thanks unto the Lord."

DR. HALL, ANNE, AND NURSE. "It is meet and right so to do."

SUSANNA. We must burn them. [*She takes a handful of the manuscripts and throws them on*

the fire. They burn, filling the room with a warm light.]

JUDITH. No, no.

THE VICAR. "It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto thee, O Lord."

[*Judith takes the unfinished manuscript from the table and holds it to her, as if to keep it away from Susanna.*]

THE VICAR. "He that soweth plenteously shall reap plenteously; let every man do as he is disposed in his heart."

[*Susanna continues to throw the manuscripts on the fire until she has burned them all.*]

THE VICAR. "Thou knoweth, Lord, the secrets of our hearts, shut not thy merciful ear to our prayer."

[*Susanna sees that Judith has the unfinished manuscript; she takes it from her.*]

THE VICAR. "We brought nothing into the world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out. The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

[*Susanna throws the unfinished manuscript on the fire.*]

THE VICAR. "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in certain hope of eternal life."

SUSANNA [*with a beatific smile, for she has done her duty*] The evil is buried with him.

JUDITH. And only the good shall live. [*Susanna and Judith go into the inner room to join in prayer at their father's side.*]

THE VICAR. "Lord, now lettest thou thy serv-

ant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people, to be a light to lighten the Gentiles; and to be the glory of thy people — "

SLOW CURTAIN

TWO CROOKS AND A LADY[1]

BY

EUGENE PILLOT

[1] Note: The author acknowledges his indebtedness to a short story, "Fibre," by Richard Washburn Child, which suggested the play.

CHARACTERS

MILLER.....The Hawk
LUCILLE.....His accomplice
MRS. SIMMS-VANE
MISS JONES.....Her companion
POLICE INSPECTOR
GARRITY.....A policeman

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TWO CROOKS AND A LADY

SCENE: *Library in the old Fifth Avenue mansion of Mrs. Simms-Vane. It is an old-fashioned, thoroughly substantial room and an ideal setting for its owner. French windows, overlooking Fifth Avenue and extending to the floor, are in the middle of the rear wall. Bookcases on each side of them extend to a door at rear right and to a writing desk at left front. There is a chair near the window, one by the table, and one by the desk. Prominent among the usual desk fittings must be a small gold stamp box. A waste-paper basket stands beside the desk, in full view of the audience. Several porcelain vases are placed about the room. A long library table, holding two brass candlesticks, is at right front. Just above it, on the right wall, a large, long mirror hangs so that it reflects the opposite side of the room.*

PLACE: *New York City.* TIME: *The present. About three o'clock on a rainy afternoon.*

The curtain rises on an empty stage, rather dark because of the rainy day and the drawn curtains. The French window in the rear opens cautiously and Miller stealthily slips into the room. He is a tall, handsome man — the usual type of gentleman crook who has emerged from the bottom of his nefarious profession. He wears a dark raincoat and a soft black hat, pulled down a little

over his eyes. As he starts to advance into the room, approaching footsteps are heard off right. Frightened, he slips behind the heavy curtains at the window.

Lucille enters from the door at right. She is in the conventional white apron and cap of a well-groomed parlor maid. She stops for a moment to tidy the table, glances up at the mirror, and starts to make a slight readjustment of her cap. Suddenly she realizes that it is too dark for her to see, goes to the window, and quickly pulls back the curtains, flooding the room with light and revealing Miller. The moment she sees Miller, she jumps back frightened.

LUCILLE [*in a loud voice*] Miller!

MILLER [*frightened, he comes forward cautiously*] Don't shout!

LUCILLE. You nearly scared the life out of me!

MILLER. Don't tell it to the whole house. [*Glances toward door.*] Lucille, anybody about?

[*Throughout the following scene, Lucille and Miller give their lines quickly, feverishly, for they fear that they may be interrupted at any moment.*]

LUCILLE. Not yet; but they wheel Mrs. Simms-Vane in here every afternoon. You 're not safe here! [*Tries to hurry him to the window.*]

MILLER [*catching her by the arm*] Quick! Where does she keep the Thirty-three?

LUCILLE [*carelessly, as she jerks her arm away*] Why should I tell you?

MILLER. Going to hog the necklace yourself 'stead of divvying up with me, huh?

LUCILLE. No.

MILLER. Then what the hell 's the matter with you?

LUCILLE. You 've been taking that Minnie out again!

MILLER. Naw, I 'm on the level with you.

LUCILLE [*scornfully*] Huh!

MILLER. Did n't I say we 'd get married soon 's we cop the necklace?

LUCILLE [*arrogantly*] I know you *said* that.

MILLER. Then, what 's in your craw? Jealous again?

LUCILLE. Why not? I 've got everything staked on you!

MILLER. And you can play it for all it 's worth. It 'll take both of us to steal the Thirty-three.

LUCILLE. Miller, it 's a wonderful necklace.

MILLER. Worth forty thousand dollars.

LUCILLE. Thirty-three blue-white diamonds. Would n't think an old dame would be so stuck on it!

MILLER. No more than we are. [*Nudges her affectionately.*] Now, where does she keep it?

LUCILLE. In this room!

MILLER. This room?

LUCILLE. Yes, they say she comes in here to look at it; but no one 's ever seen her do it!

MILLER. Good enough; we 'll cop it this very afternoon!

LUCILLE. How?

MILLER. Listen, this is the dope.

LUCILLE [*eagerly*] Uh-huh.

MILLER. Servants are off to-day, 'cept you, the cook, and the old dame's companion. Cook 's way down in the kitchen — and I 've fixed it to get the companion away.

LUCILLE. How?

MILLER. Dennis is across the street — watching this window.

LUCILLE. Why?

MILLER. When the time 's ready, I 'll signal him with this handkerchief and right off the phone here will ring. You answer it.

LUCILLE [*puzzled*] What 's the game?

MILLER. Dennis is going to send a fake message — something about a phony check — that 'll get Miss Jones out of the house. Want you to answer the phone so 's to be sure it 's Dennis. Then call her, understand?

LUCILLE. Yes!

MILLER. After that it 'll be plain sailing.

LUCILLE. But Dennis 'll want some of the boot for doing that?

MILLER. Naw, I promised him a tenner if he 'd send the phone message and then beat it to the station and get a couple of tickets for us. [*Murmur of voices from off right.*]

LUCILLE. Oh, they 're coming now. Better get away in a hurry! [*Miller runs to the window.*]

MILLER. Don't forget to answer that phone!

LUCILLE. I won't! They 're almost here! Hurry up and get out!

MILLER. No, I 'm going to stay right here.

LUCILLE. But they 'll see you!

MILLER. No, they won't. I 'll slide behind this curtain. [*He slips behind one of the window curtains, which remain partly open. He is completely concealed. Lucille pretends to arrange articles on the desk, furtively glancing at right door.*]

From right enter Miss Jones, pushing an invalid's chair in which is seated Mrs. Simms-Vane.

[*Miss Jones, the paid companion of Mrs. Simms-Vane, is a rather dull, systematic English woman, not in the least understanding her mistress, but as a result of long service, obeying her to the letter. Mrs. Simms-Vane, a hopeless paralytic for twenty years, cannot move her chin a quarter of an inch to left or right. Her body is rigid; her cheeks are webbed with the fine wrinkles of the years; her eyes are beautiful with patience; and her mouth is lovely with the firmness of suffering. Once very beautiful, she is now, at the age of sixty, as inert as a faded flower. She wears a rich but simple dress of black silk with white lace at the throat. Miss Jones wheels the chair to left center, somewhat to rear, and facing the table and the mirror on the right wall. She lifts one of the invalid's hands and places it so that it rests easily on the arm of her chair. As she goes to the other side of the chair and arranges the other hand in a similar manner, Miller, with his eye on Miss Jones and watched by Lucille, silently steps from behind the curtain, glances out the window, gives a quick wave of his handkerchief — the signal to*

the unseen Dennis — and slips behind the curtain again without being seen by either Miss Jones or Mrs. Simms-Vane.]

MRS. SIMMS-VANE [*as Miss Jones starts to make a slight adjustment of the old lady's head against the back of her chair*] No, to the right. [*Miss Jones moves the head slightly.*] Too much. More to the left. [*Miss Jones moves the head again.*]

MISS JONES. May I ask why you always want your head faced that way?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE [*coolly amused*] You may *ask.*

[*Mrs. Simms-Vane's tone causes Miss Jones to step back abashed, and she does not venture the question. The telephone on the desk rings. Miss Jones starts toward it; but Lucille has already picked it up.*]

LUCILLE. I 'll answer it, Miss Jones. [*Speaks into the telephone.*] Hello — Yes — *Yes!* [*Glances in direction of Miller.*] — All right, I 'll call her. [*Turns to Miss Jones*] It 's for you, Miss Jones.

MISS JONES. Thank you. [*Goes to telephone*] Hello — Yes — Oh, is that so? — Very well. I 'll be right down to see about it. — Thank you. Good-bye. [*Hangs up the receiver and goes to Mrs. Simms-Vane.*] Mrs. Simms-Vane, that was the Empire National Bank on the phone.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Yes?

MISS JONES. The cashier has discovered what appears to be an alteration in a check you gave Andrews, the grocer. They asked me to go im-

mediately to their down-town offices; and I told them I would.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Very well.

MISS JONES [*to Lucille*] You will remain here with Mrs. Simms-Vane. There will be nothing to do for her. [*Goes to the door at right where she turns and says to Lucille*] Even though it is raining, she will take her daily ride at four as usual. By that time, probably, I shall return.

LUCILLE [*with a superior air*] Very good, Miss Jones.

[*Exit Miss Jones. A moment's silence, then an outside door closes. Miller steps out from behind the curtain and beckons for Lucille to come to him. She does so and together they step out into the room and look threateningly at Mrs. Simms-Vane for a moment. They are now in her range of vision and she stares at them without the flicker of an eyelash.*]

MRS. SIMMS-VANE [*calmly*] Lucille, who is this gentleman? [*Lucille fidgets.*] Why is he here? [*Lucille becomes more nervous.*]

MILLER [*brushing past Lucille*] I'll do the talking!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I fear, Lucille, that I have been mistaken in you.

MILLER [*to Mrs. Simms-Vane*] Now, there'll be no nonsense!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I think I understand.

MILLER. Better for you, if you do!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Sir, will you kindly step forward three or four steps?

MILLER. What for?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I am unable, because of my infirmity, to turn my head; and I prefer to talk looking into the eyes.

MILLER [*stepping in front of Mrs. Simms-Vane*] We 'll not have much talk. [*Quickly, to Lucille*] You mind that door. [*Points to door, which Lucille closes as Miller goes to the telephone and cuts its green cord. Resuming his position in front of Mrs. Simms-Vane*] Now, Mrs. Simms-Vane, I 'll tell you why I 'm here.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Yes?

MILLER. I come for the Thirty-three, and you 're going to tell me where it is.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE [*slight surprise*] So you call it the Thirty-*three?*

MILLER. Need n't pretend you don't understand what I 'm talking about. I ain't got much time. Now, where is it? [*Points a menacing finger at Mrs. Simms-Vane's face. She merely smiles and looks at him without making the slightest movement.*]

MRS. SIMMS-VANE [*firmly, but softly*] Sir, you have made a mistake to come here.

MILLER. Mistake? Ha! [*Halfway laughs.*]

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. It is true that I am a helpless invalid and cannot call for assistance; but there is that which will cause you to fail. You shall have a disaster.

LUCILLE [*as she comes to Miller, frightened*] Oh, Miller, what does she mean?

MILLER [*ignores Lucille. Speaks sneeringly to Mrs. Simms-Vane*] You mean you 'll call on God? Well, my nerve 's good for that stuff.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE [*referring to Lucille*] Hers is not. [*Miller turns and looks at Lucille, who has become very nervous.*]

LUCILLE. It 's a lie! The old fossil!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE [*a little, slow smile passes over her face as she continues in her calm voice*] Nevertheless, I do not refer to divine assistance.

MILLER. Then, what do you mean?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I think you will fail, because you are not made of the material that succeeds. You are both of the base metals — unrestrained, passionate, and vulgar.

LUCILLE [*her vanity is hurt*] The idea!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Yes, and that is why you made a mistake to come into conflict with me.

MILLER. Bah!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. At the very outset, sir, you made a mistake.

MILLER. Mistake — what mistake?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Almost your first words disclosed the fact that you did not know where the necklace is laid away.

MILLER. You 're not very clever yourself. You 've just as well as admitted the Thirty-three 's in this room.

[*Jerks off his raincoat, throws it on the floor, and starts to search for the Thirty-three among the papers in the writing-desk drawers. Lucille still keeps guard at the door. Mrs. Simms-Vane, unable to turn her head, stares ahead at nothing.*]

MRS. SIMMS-VANE [*after a pause, in her same calm voice*] Will you trust in one who has never broken her word to anyone?

MILLER [*stops suddenly and looks at Mrs. Simms-Vane*] What are you trying to get at?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Suppose I promise to reward you [*Lucille starts forward jealously*] both to the full? [*Lucille sinks back relieved.*]

MILLER. What are you giving us?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. The necklace is my most treasured possession, not because of its money value, but because my dear, dead husband gave it to me when we were young and very happy. [*Lucille turns away, sickened by this expression of sentiment.*]

MILLER. What 's that got to do with us?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. That is why I will not have it taken from me.

LUCILLE. Listen to her!

MILLER [*coarse laugh*] Ha!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Then look out for yourselves. I warn you.

[*Miller walks back until he stands in front of Mrs. Simms-Vane. Suddenly he takes a pistol from his pocket and thrusts the muzzle of it into her face.*]

MILLER [*growling*] Where 's the thing hid? [*Mrs. Simms-Vane slowly closes her eyes and slowly opens them again. He pushes the revolver nearer her.*] Where 's it hid?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Do you think I fear that you will pull that trigger?

MILLER. Why would n't I?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Can you not see how beautiful that would be for me — a hopeless invalid?

MILLER [*not understanding*] Huh?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. But it is too much to hope. You would not shoot me.

MILLER. I 'll soon show you!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Ah, no, that would make a noise.

MILLER [*impatiently*] What if it did?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Then you could not continue your search. No, I cannot hope that you will pull that trigger.

MILLER [*realizing the truth of her words, drops the pistol to his side.*] You 're a tough old nut.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Thank you, sir. That is very kind.

MILLER. Bah! [*Then to Lucille*] Pull out the books, girlie. We 've got to frisk the whole room.

LUCILLE [*coming forward*] All right!

MILLER. Go through it systematic and fast; and look in the vases!

LUCILLE. Yes, yes! [*Begins to execute his commands.*]

MILLER. Remember, she said it was "laid away" — that 's the cue.

LUCILLE. Uh-huh.

[*Miller returns to the desk, tosses papers and boxes to the floor, opens the stamp box on the desk, finds a locked drawer, and fevcrishly splinters it open. Lucille is hastily pulling out the books from the shelves and searching the wall behind them for any secret hiding place of the necklace. The room is in a welter of disorder. Finally, Miller returns to his revolver which he left*

on the table as he made his rounds of the room, stares down at it, and bites his lip.]

MILLER [*growling*] Damn! Time wasted! [*Looks at Mrs. Simms-Vane and takes a pair of steel pliers from his side pocket, opens them, and looks down at them.*] It 's rough work; but it 's got to be done. [*Goes to Mrs. Simms-Vane and closes his hand over one of her white wrists. Her fingers move a little.*] Huh! There 's some feeling in this hand. I thought so. [*He slips the toothed jaws of the pliers between the thumb and forefinger down upon the soft flesh in the crotch of her thumb and closes the pliers upon it.*] Now, where 's the necklace? [*Mrs. Simms-Vane silently stares at him.*] Better tell. [*She merely closes her eyes.*] You better tell! [*Lucille shudders as she sees that he is squeezing the pliers in his tightening grip.*] Curse you! Out with it! Where 's the necklace?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. That is painful; but I do not think pain will ever be my master. I shall not tell you.

LUCILLE. Stop! Stop, Miller! The blood 's coming!

MILLER. Let it come.

LUCILLE. But she won't tell! Oh, you 're crushing the flesh! Stop! [*Starts to pull him away.*]

MRS. SIMMS-VANE [*opening her eyes*] Ah, she 's weakened! I said you were both made of inferior stuff. This French doll of yours, sir, was willing to see you torture an old lady who cannot move and yet a few drops of red blood make her cry

out. What a pair you are — all boastfulness; but your nerves are made of shoddy. [*Miller drops the pliers in his pocket, looks at Lucille, and sneers.*]

LUCILLE [*to Miller*] Don't! Don't look at me like that!

MILLER. Why not? The old dame 's right about us. [*Outside, a clock strikes three o'clock.*]

MRS. SIMMS-VANE [*fretfully*] It 's three. I ordered my hot milk for three.

MILLER [*wheeling toward Lucille*] The cook 'll bring it in?

LUCILLE [*sullenly*] Perhaps.

MILLER. Quick, then! Go to the kitchen. Say she sent you for it. I 'll take another look round the room. [*Lucille shrugs her shoulders and exits. Miller starts to search in the desk drawers again.*]

MRS. SIMMS-VANE [*sees him in the mirror*] Young man, I see you 're searching in those drawers again. I would not waste my time doing that.

MILLER [*startled*] Why not?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Perhaps I will tell you what you wish to know.

MILLER. What?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Come and stand in front of me.

MILLER [*he does so, staring at her.*] Well?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. You may be surprised, sir, to hear that I cannot help admiring the boldness you have shown in coming here.

MILLER. Aw, what are you giving me now?

Mrs. Simms-Vane. I have always been attracted by ability, wherever it showed itself and —

Miller [*with contempt*] Words, words.

Mrs. Simms-Vane. No-o, but you are a handsome young man, and it is a pity that your magnetism and power should be thrown away on such a worthless young woman as Lucille.

Miller. Aw, Lucille 's all right.

Mrs. Simms-Vane. Pah! You saw her cringe!

Miller. Well?

Mrs. Simms-Vane. A pretty face — that 's all she is. And you are infatuated with her — you who could win women far above her class. She stands in your way. This very occasion is an example of it.

Miller. What are you driving at?

Mrs. Simms-Vane. In the next fifteen minutes she may cost you forty thousand dollars.

Miller [*leaning nearer*] How 's it figured?

Mrs. Simms-Vane. I don't trust her; but I could — trade with you.

Miller. Trade?

Mrs. Simms-Vane. Did it not occur to you, sir, that forty thousand dollars is very little to me? If I spent it, it would be charged to my heirs.

Miller. What 's that got to do with the Thirty-three?

Mrs. Simms-Vane. I would willingly send you a check for the amount, if you would go away.

Miller [*scornfully*] Huh!

Mrs. Simms-Vane. But it is too much to ask

you to take my word for that. However, I could take yours.

MILLER [*eagerly*] Yes?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. But not if Lucille were involved.

MILLER. Why not?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I love those stones the most of all material things — and I would not trust them to her.

MILLER [*glances toward door, then leans nearer to her, alert*] How 's that again? Talk faster.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I cannot. I meant that if I could trust you — you alone — with the necklace until I could arrange to buy it back from you, I would pay you more for it than its appraised value.

MILLER. How much more?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Twenty-five per cent more.

MILLER. I 'll do it! Where 's the necklace?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. But I fear the girl.

MILLER [*discounting her*] Oh, that girl?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Yes, you love her; and a man in love is not to be trusted.

MILLER. Aw, she 's not the only girl I got.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. O-oh — and still I 've no doubt you have even agreed to share your gains with her.

MILLER. Well?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. It is that which has invited my contempt.

MILLER. I never promised her a split. Besides, I know you 're right about Lucille.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Then twenty thousand

dollars is a high price to pay for this cheap little creature's favor.

MILLER. Don't have to pay it — unless she knows I 've got the sparklers.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Would you then?

MILLER. Yes, she 's a little wildcat, and she 'd squeal on me.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Then you mean that you would not reveal to her that you have the necklace?

MILLER. Sure.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. You mean that you would give me the chance to purchase back the diamonds from you?

MILLER. Yes.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. You mean that you would promise to take nothing else from this house?

MILLER. What else is there?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. There is a stamp box on the writing desk. You opened it. I heard its click.

MILLER. What of it?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. It is made of solid gold.

MILLER [*surprised that he should have missed such a valuable article, picks it up and stares at it*] Gold? That made of gold?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Yes.

[*Thinking Mrs. Simms-Vane cannot see him, he starts to pocket the stamp box. She sees his movement reflected in the mirror and gives a low chuckle of satisfaction. He is startled, not quite sure whether she saw his action or not. Quickly,*

but reluctantly, he puts the stamp box on the desk.]

MILLER [*in an over-generous tone*] Well, what of it? I 'd play straight; but how do I know that you —

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. You would have the word of Justinia Simms-Vane. Her honor has never been questioned. It would last as long as your own.

MILLER [*stares at her a moment*] I 'm no fool. Lucille 's not worth the fuss. Where 's the necklace?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Come near me. [*He does so.*] Open the buttons of my dress.

MILLER [*accusingly*] But you said it was "laid away."

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I chose my words carefully. Open my dress.

MILLER [*opens her dress and sees the necklace round her throat*] Judas Garryowen! She wears them! What stones! What stones!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Take it quickly. [*He does so and at once begins to pick the stones from their settings.*] What are you doing?

MILLER. Aw — [*He is too busy to explain.*]

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I say, what are you doing?

MILLER. Picking the stones from their settings.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. But I don't understand —

MILLER [*picks out remaining stones*] Just a way we have. [*Drops chain into wastebasket.*]

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. What was that noise?

MILLER. Chain going into the basket. I take no chances.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. But you will do me the favor to button my dress. Lucille —

MILLER. Yes, yes; but look at them! [*Gloats over diamonds.*] Thirty-three perfect ones! A-ah, what a handful! Look! [*Holds them before her.*]

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. They are pretty; but my dress —

MILLER. All right. [*Drops stones in his right pocket, fastens her dress, and starts to adjust her lace collar.*]

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I hear Lucille bringing —

MILLER. How you going to put her off the scent?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Leave that to me. If you are the gentleman I think you are, you will have her give me the milk.

MILLER. Well; but how will you fix her?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Just continue your search.

MILLER. But I 've finished this room!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Then try the next; but leave the girl to me.

MILLER [*takes out the diamonds, looks at them a moment*] All right. [*Walks away.*] But don't you play any tricks on me.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Sir, that will depend upon you.

[*He misses her inference and starts going through the drawers again. Suddenly, Mrs. Simms-Vane hears him stop. Reflected in the mirror on the wall before her she sees him reach*

for the gold stamp box on the desk, slowly grasp it, and put it in his pocket. She sighs and closes her eyes. Lucille appears in the doorway, carrying a tray which holds a tall glass of hot milk.]

MILLER [*seeing Lucille*] You got the milk, huh?

LUCILLE. Yes, but the cook wanted to bring it in herself.

MILLER. Well, I 've frisked the room all over again.

LUCILLE. What 'd you find?

MILLER. No luck. The old lady 's done us.

LUCILLE. Look some more. We got lots more time.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I want my hot milk.

LUCILLE. Forget it! [*Sets tray on the table.*]

MILLER [*over-generous*] No, give her the milk.

LUCILLE [*surprised*] What 's come over you?

MILLER. Come here. [*Lucille does so. Half whisper*] Listen, give her the milk and keep her busy. Do anything.

LUCILLE. What for?

MILLER. I want to see if there 's anything worth picking up in the other rooms.

LUCILLE. But —?

MILLER. Go on; give her the milk.

[*Astounded, Lucille stares at him; but she takes the milk to Mrs. Simms-Vane. Miller wanders through the door into the adjoining room. Again and again his shadow appears near the doorway, as though he were watching the women.*]

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. You forget, my dear, that I cannot move. Put the glass to my lips. [*Lucille does so.*] A little nearer. [*Lucille puts the*

glass nearer Mrs. Simms-Vane's lips.] The other side. [*Peeved, Lucille glances at her; but moves the glass to the other side of Mrs. Simms-Vane's mouth.*] What 's that? Dirt? Is that dirt in my milk? [*Impatiently, Lucille looks at the milk. Whispering*] Do not show any surprise, Lucille. Keep looking at the milk.

LUCILLE [*whispering*] Yes.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE [*whispering*] He has the necklace!

LUCILLE [*whispering*] Oh!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE [*whispering*] If you show him that you know, he will kill you. Don't move! [*Loudly*] Is it dirt in my milk? Look again.

LUCILLE. I 'm trying to see. [*Whispering*] You 're trying to make a fool of me!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE [*whispering*] No, but he has tricked you and means to leave you to your fate. He has the diamonds!

LUCILLE [*whispering*] Oh!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE [*whispering*] The necklace without the stones is in the wastebasket. The revolver — is on the table.

LUCILLE [*in hushed voice, as Miller enters*] Oh.

MILLER [*seeing Lucille's suspicious attitude, turns to Mrs. Simms-Vane*] What are you trying to do — cut Lucille off from me? [*Lucille looks away.*]

MRS. SIMMS-VANE [*significantly*] Did you find it — what you came for?

MILLER [*hesitates, then sullenly*] No. [*Starts to look in the bookcases. Lucille sets glass on the*

table, runs to the wastebasket, looks in, and utters a cry of rage. Miller turns swiftly.]

LUCILLE. You 've got it, you dog! [*Both rush for the revolver. She gets it.*] Stand back now!

MILLER. But Lucille —

LUCILLE. You double-crossed me — after I loved you so!

MILLER. Listen, girlie, the old lady 's framed us. I love you, girlie. You know me. You get your share! This was the only way I could get the necklace! It was all for you!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Oh, Lucille, you little fool! The other woman is the one!

LUCILLE. I thought so! I 'm going to kill you!

MILLER [*desperately*] I love you!

LUCILLE. Oh! [*Pained, she closes her eyes. Miller seizes a brass candlestick from the table and hurls it blindly at her, striking the wall behind her.*] You dog! [*She shoots. He falls to the floor.*] Oh, what have I done? What have I done? [*Covers her face. Outside a policeman's whistle is blown twice. Lucille is still too horrified by her crime to hear it; but Mrs. Simms-Vane smiles knowingly and closes her eyes.*]

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I said it would be disaster for him to cross me. He broke his agreement with me. He did not know that I could see him in the mirror over the table when he took the little stamp box. [*Outside the police whistle again.*]

LUCILLE [*hears whistle*] O-oh, the police!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. And now, you are a murderess.

LUCILLE [*running to her*] No! No! Please save me!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I wonder if you are really bad. I doubt it. You are too young to be put in jail.

LUCILLE. You will save me?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I shall tell a little white lie for you, if you deserve it.

LUCILLE [*piteous fright*] Oh, if you only would! [*Off right the doorbell rings. Lucille becomes more frightened and glances apprehensively toward the door.*]

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. I shall say you shot him in defending me. But we must hurry! That may be the police ringing now.

LUCILLE. Oh!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Put the revolver in my lap. [*Lucille does so.*]

LUCILLE. Oh, I don't deserve to be saved!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Never mind. Go put your hand in the young man's coat pocket.

LUCILLE. Oh, no! I 'm afraid to touch him!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Do as I say.

[*Reluctantly, Lucille goes to Miller. She starts to reach for his pocket, shudders, and recoils from him.*]

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. The right side. [*Lucille is startled that Mrs. Simms-Vane should know the correct pocket; but she quickly thrusts her hand into it.*] Do you feel the diamonds?

LUCILLE [*gloating*] Yes; here they are. [*As she lifts the stones from Miller's pocket, she pauses, swiftly putting back a stray wisp of hair over her right ear.*]

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Are you sure you have all of them?

LUCILLE. Yes!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. You did not leave a single one?

LUCILLE [*overconfident*] No, I'm sure!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Then count each one and drop it into my hand.

[*Lucille is startled, and fears that she has been trapped, but quickly recovers her composure.*]

LUCILLE [*counting the diamonds into Mrs. Simms-Vane's hand — the one that was not tortured by Miller*] One, two, three — how wonderful they are! [*Insistent ringing of the doorbell causes her to hasten her counting.*] Four, five, six — [*She quickly continues to count toward thirty.*]

[*The doorbell has ceased ringing. An outside door opens and closes. A growing murmur of voices. A man exclaims, "But we heard a shot fired!" A woman replies, "But it could n't have been here!" The man, "We 'll have a look anyway."*]

LUCILLE [*still counting*] Thirty, thirty-one, thirty-two [*a pause of surprise*], thirty-three!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE [*suspiciously*] Thirty-*three?*

LUCILLE [*bewildered, but relieved*] Yes, thirty-three.

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Then I have the stones my husband gave me, — all back again?

LUCILLE. All.

From right enter Miss Jones, in hat and raincoat, followed by Police Inspector.

MISS JONES [*to Inspector*] I'll prove to you there was nothing — [*Seeing Mrs. Simms-Vane, rushes to her.*] Oh, Mrs. Simms-Vane, are you all right?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Yes.

MISS JONES. Nothing has happened?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. No — everything.

Policeman Garrity appears in the doorway.

GARRITY [*to Miss Jones, as he appears*] Old lady safe?

[*Miller stirs feebly. Miss Jones sees him.*]

MISS JONES. Yes, but, Inspector [*points to Miller*], look!

MILLER [*feebly*] Hello, Inspector.

INSPECTOR [*to Garrity*] Miller, the Hawk! [*To Mrs. Simms-Vane*] Excuse me, ma'am, but who shot this man?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. The maid.

LUCILLE. I was defending her!

MILLER. That's a lie! The little cat was the "inside" on this job. We messed it up, and she shot me. She thought I double-crossed her.

LUCILLE. Oh, how he talks! I never saw that man before in all my life! Did I, Mrs. Simms-Vane?

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. My dear young woman, I tried to give you a chance. Now I advise the officers to arrest you. You were his accomplice.

LUCILLE. But you said — you promised —

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Certainly. But in my necklace there were not the number of stones you counted out to me. You kept one.

LUCILLE. No! No!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Yes, you did. The necklace was given to me by my husband on my thirty-fourth, not my thirty-third, birthday. You thought I did not know the number of my own stones; so you kept one.

MILLER. Ha! That serves the little devil proper. But it 's just like her! I know her tricks! Look under the hair over her ears!

[*Inspector and Garrity start to examine her; but she breaks away from them.*]

LUCILLE. Keep away from me! I 'll give her the stone! [*She reaches under the hair over her right ear and throws the diamond into Mrs. Simms-Vane's lap.*] You old hag!

MRS. SIMMS-VANE. Miss Jones [*Miss Jones comes forward*], have the officers take these persons away.

[*Miss Jones nods to the officers to remove Lucille and Miller. Garrity takes Lucille into his custody and they exeunt right. The Inspector helps Miller up and starts toward the door with him, where Miller turns round.*]

MILLER [*savagely to Mrs. Simms-Vane*] You 'll not beat us again! [*The Inspector pulls him out.*]

MRS. SIMMS-VANE [*serenely ignoring his re-*

mark] Miss Jones [*Miss Jones goes nearer to her, waiting*], you may order my carriage as usual.

[*Miss Jones is surprised, but quickly nods assent and starts toward the door.*]

CURTAIN

FREE SPEECH

A FARCE

BY

WILLIAM L. PROSSER

CHARACTERS

The Corporal
The Prisoner
Ivan
Nikolai
Feodor
Boris
Sergius

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FREE SPEECH

SCENE: *The courtyard of a prison somewhere in Russia. At the rear, a wall. In the center of the wall, two heavy iron doors, which open outward. On the left, the prison itself. Down left, the entrance to a passage leading into the prison.*

There enter, from the prison, a firing squad of five men, commanded by a Corporal. In their midst, a Prisoner. The men in the squad are Ivan, Nikolai, Feodor, Boris, and Sergius.

THE CORPORAL. Halt! Left face! Stand at ease! Prisoner, step forward.

THE PRISONER. What is it now?

CORPORAL. Listen once again to the sentence which has been passed upon you.

PRISONER. I have heard it nine times already.

CORPORAL. That does n't make any difference. This is the sentence of the court. [*He reads*] "The prisoner, Frederick Kraus — "

PRISONER. My name is Spiegel.

CORPORAL. What 's that?

PRISONER. My name is Spiegel — Heinrich Spiegel.

CORPORAL. You told the court it was Kraus. It does n't make any difference. [*Reads*] "The prisoner, Frederick Kraus, citizen of Germany,

having resided in Petrograd under the name of Dmitri Demochkin — "

PRISONER. It was n't in Petrograd. It was in Pskov.

CORPORAL. It does n't make any difference. Don't interrupt! [*Reads*] " — under the name of Dmitri Demochkin, has been twice tried on the charge of setting off explosions in two powder factories, and causing the death of three thousand people. He has been found guilty by unanimous vote of a jury of twenty-nine loyal Maximalists — "

PRISONER. They were all drunk.

CORPORAL. " — and is therefore sentenced to be shot at by a firing squad until he is dead." We will now proceed with the execution. Comrades, attention! The Prisoner is directed to stand over against the wall.

[*The Prisoner looks the Corporal up and down, stares coolly at the squad, shrugs his shoulders, and saunters nonchalantly over to the wall. There he turns.*]

PRISONER. I wish to speak.

CORPORAL. What 's that?

PRISONER. I have something to say.

CORPORAL. You can't do it.

PRISONER. I have the right of free speech! I demand my right to be heard!

CORPORAL. You have spoken already. Two full hours at the trial. That was why they found you guilty. It is too late now.

NIKOLAI [*stepping out from the ranks*] What! Too late?

PRISONER [*appealing to the squad*] Comrades, I demand my rights!

NIKOLAI. Every man has the right to speak at all times, so long as no other man is speaking. Let us thank God, Comrade Corporal, that there is no longer any czarist régime over us to keep our mouths closed! [*To the Prisoner*] Speak, comrade! It is your right!

CORPORAL. Look here, this is going to delay the execution!

SERGIUS [*stepping from the ranks*] It makes no difference! It is his right! Speak, comrade!

PRISONER. Comrades, do you know who I am? I stand before you as the representative of Germany in an effort to bring about peace among nations. And do you know who it is that have condemned me? A court composed entirely of lower middle-class capitalists, inspired by the imperialists of the Allied countries. [*General astonishment, mingled with doubt.*] The prosecutor, as I can prove absolutely, was a masquerading Kornilovist in disguise! [*Excitement.*] The judge had held court under the former Czar — [*consternation*] and ten men on the jury even wore collars! [*Horror and disgust.*] Comrades! Are seven free men to subject themselves to idle aristocrats who are pampered by luxury? Comrades, I ask you to refuse to recognize a decision of this counter-revolutionary and anti-democratic court as binding upon you. Is not democracy itself speaking to you, comrades? Does it not cry out against the murder of one who has given his whole life to promote international peace? Com-

rades, I demand that you give me a vote of your approval, and express a want of confidence in my sentence!

Boris [*stepping from the ranks*] Bravo! Let me also speak!

Corporal. Comrade Boris, you cannot —

Boris. I have the right to speak as well as he!

Corporal. That does n't make —

Prisoner. I yield the floor to you, comrade

Corporal. That does n't make any —

Ivan [*stepping forward*] He has the right to do it, Comrade Corporal. That is parliamentary law.

Feodor. Speak, comrade!

Corporal. Look here, this —

The Squad [*threateningly*] Speak, comrade!

[*The Corporal subsides.*]

Boris. Comrades! Can anything be more atrocious than for us to permit the execution of this man, who speaks to us as an apostle and champion of the peace and liberty of the world? Does not the injustice of his condemnation cry aloud to the heavens against the infamy of the *bourgeoisie* —

Corporal. The what?

Boris. The *bourgeoisie!* The thieving middle classes, who wear collars and shave their faces. Comrades, let us abolish the middle class!

Feodor. I propose a want of confidence in the court which condemned the Prisoner!

Corporal. Look here! You can't do that! That court has been selected by —

NIKOLAI. That does n't make any difference.

FEODOR. The Corporal is the representative of the court. I propose a want of confidence in the Corporal.

IVAN. He is right!

BORIS. Yes, yes, he is right!

CORPORAL. Comrades, I demand the right to be heard!

BORIS. No, no! Want of confidence!

CORPORAL. It is my right!

IVAN. He has the right to speak. Be reasonable, comrades!

SERGIUS. Speak, then!

FEODOR. Yes, speak!

[*The Corporal walks up and down the line, appealing to each individual in turn.*]

CORPORAL. Comrades, you are becoming very foolish. I solemnly protest against this condemnation of the middle classes. I am a middle-class man myself, and I am just as good a revolutionist as any of you. And the court which condemned the Prisoner to be shot was just as revolutionary as I am. I ask, comrades, that you pass a resolution confirming the lawfulness of the Prisoner's death. I hope that you understand that the Prisoner is a criminal, and that it is better to deprive one dangerous man of his life than to sacrifice thousands of useful lives in —

PRISONER. I move to discontinue your speech, Comrade Corporal.

[*Silence. General amazement.*]

CORPORAL. And by what right, comrade ex-

ploder of powder magazines, do you constitute yourself the chairman of this assembly?

PRISONER. There is no other chairman.

SERGIUS. Let us elect one, then!

CORPORAL. We can elect one after we have shot the Prisoner.

FEODOR. We must elect one so that we can vote whether we are to shoot the Prisoner or not.

NIKOLAI. How shall we elect him?

BORIS. Does anybody know how to be a chairman?

IVAN. I do. I know parliamentary law.

NIKOLAI. Then let us make Comrade Ivan the chairman!

FEODOR. I propose Comrade Ivan for chairman.

BORIS. Yes, let Ivan be chairman.

SERGIUS. Let us vote!

CORPORAL [*turning away in disgust*] There is no need. It is unanimous. Comrade Ivan is the chairman.

IVAN. God is good. I will be the chairman.

NIKOLAI. There is a motion before the meeting.

IVAN. I do not remember any motion.

PRISONER. Mr. Chairman, I have moved to discontinue the speech of Comrade Corporal.

FEODOR. What was he speaking about?

BORIS. No matter what. He has the right of free speech!

IVAN. We must vote upon the motion first, and then speak about it afterward. This is parliamentary law.

Boris. What is parliamentary law?

Ivan. Parliamentary law is — why, it is what I say.

Boris. Is it anything like the laws of the zemstvos?

Ivan. It is something like them.

Boris. Then let us abolish parliamentary law! Let us abolish all laws! I am an anarchist!

Sergius. The anarchists are ruining the country!

Boris. The anarchists are the hope of the nation! The anarchists are —

Sergius. They are not!

Boris. They are!

Prisoner [*breaking in*] There is a motion before the meeting!

Feodor. What is the motion?

Prisoner [*wearily*] The motion is to discontinue the speech of Comrade Corporal.

Sergius. It is already discontinued.

Ivan. That makes no difference. We must vote upon the motion anyway.

Nikolai. Is that parliamentary law?

Ivan. It is.

Sergius. Then let us vote!

Corporal [*savagely*] Yes! Let us *vote!*

Ivan. Very well, we will vote. All those who wish to discontinue the speech of Comrade Corporal will go to the right of the gate, and face that wall. All those who do not wish to discontinue it will go to the left of the gate, and face that wall.

Boris. That vote is not fair!

IVAN. It is! That is how the zemstvos vote.

BORIS. That does n't —

IVAN. It does!

SERGIUS. Comrades, I cast my vote by going to the right.

NIKOLAI. I go to the left.

IVAN. Let us vote.

[*All cast their votes, each saying "right" or "left" as he does so. Boris, Sergius, and Feodor go to the right; Ivan and Nikolai go to the left. The Corporal and the Prisoner remain glaring at each other. The Prisoner sniffs contemptuously, says "Right," turns around and joins the three voters behind him. The Corporal snorts in disgust and goes to the left.*]

IVAN [*to Boris*] You are not facing the wall.

BORIS. That does n't make —

IVAN. It does! You must face the wall. That is the rule.

BORIS. You are not facing the wall.

IVAN. That is different. I must count the votes.

BORIS. I will count them.

IVAN. No, no! I am the chairman! Turn around!

[*Boris reluctantly turns to face the wall. Ivan comes to the center, and counts on his fingers.*]

IVAN. Four votes have gone to the right, and three to the left. Therefore, the right has it.

FEODOR. Which was the right, now?

IVAN. The right was to discontinue the speech of Comrade Corporal.

FEODOR. Then I went to the wrong side. [*He shoulders his gun and starts to cross to the left, but Ivan stops him in the middle of the court.*]

IVAN. The vote cannot be taken over again! No, no!

NIKOLAI. That is n't —

IVAN. It is!

NIKOLAI. It is not! Speak, Comrade Corporal! [*A slight pause.*]

CORPORAL. I have forgotten what I was going to say.

NIKOLAI. God is good. [*A pause.*]

FEODOR. What are we to do now?

SERGIUS [*striding to the center*] Comrades, I demand the right to speak!

CORPORAL. No, no, Comrade Sergius—

SERGIUS [*ignoring him*] Comrades, the land of the people should be divided up —

IVAN. Wait a moment! This is a meeting. We must have a secretary.

BORIS. What for?

IVAN. He is an official.

BORIS. Down with all officials. Let us have anarchy!

IVAN. You don't understand. This is a different kind of official. He must keep the records of the meeting.

FEODOR. I will be the secretary.

IVAN. You cannot write.

FEODOR. That makes no difference.

CORPORAL. Blockhead! How can you keep records when you can't write?

FEODOR. Can you write?

CORPORAL. Yes.

FEODOR. Then I propose that the Corporal shall be the secretary.

PRISONER. I can write too.

BORIS. Then I propose that the Prisoner shall be the secretary.

SERGIUS. Let us vote!

BORIS. This voting is all nonsense!

IVAN. Those who wish Comrade Corporal to be the secretary will go to the right of the gate. Those who wish the Prisoner to be the secretary will go to the left of the gate. Now let us vote.

[*They vote. Boris, Sergius, and Ivan go to the left. Nikolai goes to the right. The Corporal and the Prisoner cross to opposite sides, glaring at each other as they meet on the way. The Corporal votes right, the Prisoner left. Feodor is left standing alone in the center of the courtyard.*]

FEODOR. Which is the right, and which is the left?

CORPORAL. Booby! How did you vote the last time?

FEODOR. I don't remember.

IVAN. Do you want the Corporal or the Prisoner to be the secretary?

FEODOR. I don't know.

CORPORAL. Answer the question, you fool! Whom do you want to be the secretary?

FEODOR. I want to be the secretary.

CORPORAL. Idiot! Come here! [*Feodor comes to the right wall.*] Now do you want to go back to the other side?

CORPORAL. He has voted.

BORIS. That vote is not fair!

IVAN. It does n't make any difference. There are four to the left, and only three to the right. The Prisoner is the secretary.

FEODOR. Then what are we to do now?

SERGIUS [*stepping forward*] Comrades, the land —

CORPORAL [*drowning him out*] We must shoot the Prisoner!

NIKOLAI. What for?

CORPORAL. He is a criminal. He has been condemned to death by the court. He deserves to be shot. He has —

PRISONER [*very coolly*] We have voted to discontinue your speech, Comrade Corporal. [*He draws a pencil and a notebook from his pocket, and goes up to the gate in the rear wall, where he sits down to write the records of the meeting.*]

CORPORAL [*furious; pursuing him up toward the gate*] You can't do that! It is not —

IVAN [*intervening and stopping him*] He can! He is right! We have voted! That is parliamentary law!

SERGIUS. Comrades, I demand to be allowed to speak!

CORPORAL [*in desperation*] Comrade Sergius, I beg you!

[*Sergius shoves him aside, takes the center of the court, and begins to speak. Boris and the Corporal turn away in disgust. The rest listen with marked attention.*]

SERGIUS. Comrades! The land of the nation should be divided among the farming class. The workers of the people have labored for centuries under tyrants. They have tilled land that did not belong to them, and given the grain to the nobles. Comrades, they have earned the right to rule! Comrades! The rulers of to-day should not be the middle classes, nor the infamous capitalists, nor the soldiers who are covered with innocent blood. They should be the farmers, who have earned —

BORIS [*bursting forth*] I move to discontinue your speech, Comrade Sergius!

SERGIUS [*swooping on him*] You are a fool as well as an anarchist!

BORIS. You are a thief!

IVAN [*trying to separate them*] Comrades! Comrades, do not quarrel!

BORIS [*trying to get at Sergius*] He is a capitalist! He wears a collar!

SERGIUS. You are drunk!

FEODOR [*to Ivan*] I demand the right to speak!

BORIS. He is a Kornilovist! He is —

SERGIUS. You are a liar!

IVAN [*restraining Sergius*] Silence!

CORPORAL [*between Boris and Sergius*] Silence!

BORIS. Down with everything!

[*Uproar.*]

FEODOR [*pursuing Ivan, and above the uproar*] I demand the right to speak!

IVAN. Silence! Silence! Silence, Comrade

Boris! [*Silence is partially restored.*] Comrade Feodor has the right to speak and be heard!

Boris. That is not —

Ivan. It is!

Feodor [*breaking in*] Comrades, I propose that this meeting shall declare war upon those who are menacing the peace of the world!

All. Bravo!

Boris. Bravo! Bravo!

Feodor. Let us join hands with those who are our brothers! Let us try with them to prevent the slaughter! Let us declare war upon their enemies!

All. Bravo!

Feodor. Let us declare war immediately upon England!

Boris and the Prisoner. Bravo!

Sergius and the Corporal. No! No!

Sergius. Let us declare war on Germany!

Nikolai. Let us declare war on both!

Boris [*shaking his fist in the Corporal's face*] You are a czarist!

Corporal. You are a fool!

Feodor. I demand the right to speak!

Boris. Down with the government!

Corporal. Silence!

Ivan. Silence!

Boris. Down with everybody!

[*General uproar. Ivan runs from group to group, and finally makes himself heard.*]

Ivan. Silence! Silence, comrades, silence, I say! Silence, Comrade Boris! [*The tumult subsides to a certain degree.*] You cannot make

a motion like that. It is not parliamentary law! [*Complete silence.*]

FEODOR. Why not?

IVAN. It is not, because I say it is not.

BORIS. Down with parliamentary law!

FEODOR. You cannot make things true by saying they are true!

SERGIUS. He is right!

NIKOLAI. No! No! He is wrong!

[*"He's right!" "He's wrong!" Renewed uproar.*]

CORPORAL [*struck with an inspiration*] Silence! Silence, comrades! Comrade Ivan is right. The motion cannot be made because there is already a motion before the meeting.

FEODOR. What is the motion?

CORPORAL. The motion is — to shoot the Prisoner!

BORIS. I do not remember any such motion.

SERGIUS. Was there a motion to shoot you, comrade?

PRISONER. No!

CORPORAL. Then I will make the motion now. I move to shoot the Prisoner.

PRISONER [*pushing past him, to Ivan*] Mr. Chairman, I move to withdraw that motion, and shoot the Corporal instead.

CORPORAL. You can't do that!

PRISONER. Of course I can!

IVAN [*separating them*] He can! He has the right to do it, Comrade Corporal!

FEODOR. Then I move to withdraw that motion, and shoot neither one of them.

BORIS. No, no!

NIKOLAI. Yes, let us shoot neither the Corporal nor the Prisoner! Let us go out and find some capitalist, and shoot him instead!

BORIS. Let us shoot all three!

FEODOR. Let us vote!

IVAN. What is the motion before the meeting?

FEODOR. I don't know.

SERGIUS. Ask the secretary.

PRISONER. There are two motions before the meeting. One is to shoot the Prisoner. The other is to shoot the Corporal.

IVAN. We will vote on the first one first. We will vote whether we shall shoot the Prisoner or not. I will call out the names, and each man will say yes or no. Those who say Yes will go to the right of the gate. Those who say No will go to the left of the gate. Comrade Corporal!

CORPORAL. Yes! [*He goes to the right, and stands facing the wall.*]

IVAN. Comrade Sergius!

[*The Prisoner has risen, and opened one of the doors in the wall enough for passage. Seeing the Corporal's back turned, and the attention of the rest fixed on Sergius, he bolts out. The door closes behind him. His exit is unnoticed.*]

SERGIUS. Comrade, I insist that the land of the people —

IVAN. No, no!

CORPORAL [*facing about*] Idiot! We are voting now!

SERGIUS. That does n't make any —

IVAN. It does! Be still!

SERGIUS [*doggedly*] It does n't make a —

IVAN. How do you vote?

SERGIUS. No!

IVAN. Then go and stand over there. And be silent! [*Sergius goes to the left wall.*] Comrade Nikolai!

NIKOLAI. Yes. [*He goes to the right.*]

IVAN. Comrade Feodor!

FEODOR. No. [*He goes left.*]

IVAN. Comrade Boris!

BORIS. Yes! [*He crosses to the right.*]

IVAN. How does the Prisoner vote?

[*A dead silence. With very blank expressions, all slowly look around.*]

FEODOR. Where is the Prisoner?

NIKOLAI. He is gone!

CORPORAL. You fools! You have let him get away! [*He runs to the doors, and flings them open.*] Run after him!

[*They crowd through the gateway into the street outside. Boris and Nikolai run to the left; Feodor and the Corporal to the right. Ivan and Sergius remain standing in the street.*]

SERGIUS. He is not in sight.

IVAN. We do not know which way he went.

[*A short pause.*]

BORIS [*returning*] It is hopeless to run after him.

FEODOR [*returning*] We could never catch him now.

NIKOLAI [*returning*] God is good.

[*A pause. They come back into the court-*

yard. The Corporal is the last to return. He stands in the gateway, surveying the squad, too full for words. Silence for a moment.]

FEODOR. What are we to do now?

BORIS. Who let him get away?

FEODOR. The Corporal!

BORIS. Then let us shoot the Corporal!

[*Boris, Sergius, Feodor, and Nikolai immediately level their rifles at the Corporal.*]

CORPORAL. What! You are going to try to shoot me?

BORIS. You were ordered by the court to have the Prisoner shot. He was in your charge. You let him get away. You deserve death! [*He cocks his rifle.*]

CORPORAL. It was not my fault that he got away.

BORIS. It was!

SERGIUS. It makes no difference.

IVAN [*getting his first chance to speak*] There is a motion before the meeting.

FEODOR. What is it?

IVAN. To shoot the Corporal.

SERGIUS. Let us vote!

NIKOLAI [*lowering his gun*] Wait, comrade! Comrade Chairman, this meeting has now no secretary.

FEODOR. We shall have to elect one.

IVAN. We must have a secretary.

BORIS. But it will delay the execution!

NIKOLAI. That makes no difference.

BORIS. But the Corporal is the only one who can read and write!

IVAN. Let us elect him, then!

BORIS. But we are going to shoot him!

IVAN. That makes no difference.

NIKOLAI. I propose that the Corporal shall be the secretary.

FEODOR. Let us vote!

IVAN. All who wish the Corporal to be the secretary will go to the right. [*General movement to the right. The Corporal seizes the opportunity, and walks out the open gateway unnoticed.*] There is no need to vote. It is unanimous. The Corporal is the secretary.

BORIS. Then let us shoot him.

IVAN. Those who wish to kill the Corporal will say yes, and go to the right. Those who do not wish to kill him will say no, and go to the left. Comrade Nikolai!

NIKOLAI. Yes.

IVAN. Comrade Feodor!

FEODOR. Yes.

IVAN. Comrade Sergius!

SERGIUS. Yes.

IVAN. Comrade Boris!

BORIS. Yes!

IVAN. Comrade Corporal!

[*Again a blank silence. Boris wheels slowly about, and stands speechless. Nikolai turns more quickly, Feodor still more quickly, and Sergius as if on a pivot. Consternation.*]

SERGIUS. Why, he has gone too!

[*Sergius, Ivan, Nikolai, and Feodor run to the gateway, crowd through it, and stand looking up*

and down the street. Boris remains standing in the courtyard.]

BORIS. But we are unanimous! He is condemned to be shot!

FEODOR. He is not in sight.

IVAN. He is gone.

NIKOLAI. God is good.

[*They drift slowly back into the courtyard again. There is a pause.*]

BORIS. Who let him get away?

SERGIUS. He got away during the voting.

FEODOR. Who started the voting?

NIKOLAI. Comrade Ivan started it. He is the chairman.

BORIS. Then let us shoot comrade Ivan!

[*Four rifles are pointed at Ivan.*]

IVAN. You cannot shoot a chairman. That is not parliamentary law.

[*A pause. The rifles are lowered.*]

BORIS. Then what are we going to shoot?

SERGIUS. Who started the whole execution?

FEODOR. The court that condemned the Prisoner!

NIKOLAI. There were ten men on the jury who wore collars!

BORIS. Comrades! [*He seizes Sergius by the arm, and draws the others together into a group.*] Are free men to subject themselves to idle aristocrats who are pampered by luxury? Let us go and set fire to the courtroom, and kill the infamous judges where they stand! Comrades! Follow me! [*He draws Sergius out the gate; the*

others start to follow. Sergius breaks free from his hold, and turns in the gateway to argue.]

SERGIUS. No, no, Comrade Boris! Let us reason with the men!

FEODOR. And then they will take off the collars!

BORIS. But if they do not listen to reason, let us kill them!

NIKOLAI. Let us go!

FEODOR. Yes, let us go!

[*They start going out the gate. Boris pauses to deliver one last oration.*]

BORIS. Let us refuse to recognize the laws of a counter-revolutionary and anti-democratic body as binding upon us! Down with all judges! Down with all courts and all governments! Let us have anarchy!

SERGIUS. No, no, Comrade Boris! Let us have a democracy, with the right of free speech for every man. The anarchists are ruining the country; but a democracy with free speech is the greatest of all the gifts of God.

NIKOLAI. God is good.

[*They go out, and are heard to pass down the street to the right. After a moment, the Prisoner steals in from the prison, carrying something under his coat. He goes to the gate, looks after the departed Russians, and laughs to himself.*

He returns to the prison wall, and takes from under his coat a fuse bomb. He plants the bomb by the prison wall, takes from his pocket a box of matches, and lights the fuse. He rises, and turns toward the gate once more.

As he turns he begins to whistle a tune. It is "Die Wacht am Rhein." He strolls out the gate: the whistling swells to a triumphal march, and the fuse burns on.]

CURTAIN

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